

THE Saturday Journal

A POPULAR PAPER WEEKLY FOR PLEASURE & PROFIT

Vol. I. No. 49.

BRADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,
98 William Street.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 18, 1871.

TERMS: \$3.00 per annum in advance.
\$1.00 for four months.

Price 6 Cents.

THOUGHTS BEFORE MY MIRROR.

BY MRS. MARY M. COMSTOCK.

And who is this before me now?
That in my glass I see,
With faded hair and furrowed brow?
Oh, I, thus can not be!
My soul responds to joyous strains,
My heart, it is not cold.
The warm blood courses through my veins,
Then how can I be old?
'Tis true the babe upon my breast
Has grown to manhood's prime;
My cherished ones now seek their rest
In other arms than mine;
And summers, ten times six, have passed,
With all their bloom and blight;
Yet still my spirit seems to bask
In childhood's sunny light.
Oh, cruel time! relentless foe!
Though in thy plumes' fold
My form may sink beneath thy blow,
My heart can not grow old.

The White Witch: OR, THE LEAGUE OF THREE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "HEART OF FIRE," "WOLF DEMON,"
"SCARLET HAND," "ACE OF SPADES," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASQUERADE-BALL.

THE large ball-room of the Ocean House at Newport, the far-famed summer-resort, was filled almost to suffocation by a gay and brilliant throng.

It was the last masquerade of the season—the crowning triumph of mirth's brilliant reign.

On the morrow the crowd of laughing maskers would depart for their city homes. The crash of the music mingled with the joyous notes of the hilarious voices, with the rustle of the motley masquerading garments, and the light tread of tripping feet.

In a corner of the room stood two of the masqueraders in close conversation. The two were of the sterner sex. Like all within the room, they were habited in fanciful costumes, which, with the masks they wore over their faces, completely concealed their identity.

The first of the two, who stood nearest to the door that gave entrance to the ball-room, was small in stature; a dainty little fellow; in form, an Apollo in miniature. He was dressed in a rich court suit, of the style worn by the butterfly courtiers of Louis the XIV of France. The coat was of the finest silk-velvet, a rich wine in color, and adorned with heavy, gold embroidery and jeweled buttons, that sparkled like diamonds in the blaze of the gas-light. His perfectly proportioned lower limbs were incased in pearly silk stockings and lemon-colored knee-breeches of lustrous satin. The diamond-buckled shoes, the embroidered waistcoat, flowing lace necktie and powdered wig, completed the elegant costume.

The dress was perfect and fitted the perfect form of the young man like a kid-glove fits the hand.

One thing we have neglected to mention. In the snowy folds of the costly lace handkerchief, that was fastened carelessly around his neck, gleamed a strange ornament. It was a golden breastpin, fashioned in the likeness of the tulip flower, and thickly spotted with tiny little rubies. An odd conceit.

The second of the two was a large and portly person. He was dressed as a monk, in a gray domino, the cowl drawn tightly over his head. The domino was girded at the waist by a string of wooden beads, from which hung a rudely-shaped cross. His face was concealed by a mask that portrayed the features of an old man with a heavy, flowing, gray beard.

The hands of the monk, playing nervously with the cross suspended from his waist, were coarse and clumsy, red in color and ugly in outline—the hands of a man accustomed to rough and dirty labor, yet they were covered with rings wherein shone precious stones. Diamonds and rubies, emeralds and pearls, adorned the ugly, coarse fingers.

There was as much difference between the hands of the large man who wore the monk's garb and the white and delicate fingers of his companion, dressed in the court suit, as there was in their figures. As much difference in their natures as there was in their hands.

Yet these two men were intimate friends. The smaller of the two—the delicate little fellow—was called Tulip Roche; a gentleman by birth and breeding, an exquisite by nature and by habit. The only son of wealthy parents, at their death he had inherited an ample fortune.

Tulip was noted among the fast young "blooms" of New York—in which city he resided—for his taste and excellent judgment.

He was the best-dressed man who walked Broadway. His carriages and horses not excelled by any "turnout" ever seen within the thronged driveways of Central Park. His up-town mansion on Murray Hill was the envy of the neighborhood. All that taste could devise or money procure adorned it.

"A glorious, good fellow, though devilish peculiar in his ideas," said the World, of Tulip Roche.

His companion, the stout man dressed as a monk, was called Herman Stoll—a German by birth, or, as his enemies said, bluntness, a German Jew; as though a man's birth and parentage could be flung in his face as a disgrace.

Was the taunt of his foes truth or not, Herman Stoll indignantly denied that Jewish blood flowed in his veins, although, after one look into his face—one quick glance

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Within one month, or one year, you will lose wealth, friends and love. All will desert you.

at the high cheek-bones, large, curved nose, piercing black eyes, and short, curly, curling hair—any one gifted with the skill of "reading faces," would surely have concluded that Herman Stoll lied when he declared that no blood of the scattered nation, who can not claim a country of their own, ran in his veins.

Herman Stoll was a broker by occupation, doing business in Wall street, and reputed to be a sharp, far-seeing man, and one well gifted with this world's golden treasures.

If the broker was not a wealthy man he acted like one, and spent money as freely as though it were as easily got as water.

A great patron of the "turf" was Herman; a bright and shining light among the frequenters of Jerome Park, and like places. His face, too, was well known to the *attaches* of the opera-house and the leading theaters.

But to the conversation of the two.

"Who is that?" asked Stoll, as a tall, elegant figure wearing the sable robes of "Hamlet," and having on his arm a blonde beauty attired in the bluish sheen of "Morning," passed by them.

"Which one—the man or the woman?" asked Tulip.

"Well, both?" replied his friend.

"To commence with the lady first, she is called Frances Chauncy."

"What! the Lexington avenue belle?" interrupted Stoll.

"The same," Tulip replied.

"Ah, I didn't know that she was here."

"You haven't used your eyes much, then."

"Why, is she stopping at the hotel?" asked Stoll.

"No, she is with some friends, who have a cottage near the West Beach."

"Ah, I thought that it would be impossible for her to stop here and escape my notice."

"She has been out on the drive and down on the beach often enough."

"Yes, that may be, but I haven't happened to notice her," replied Stoll; "but the man, who is he? He looks deuced well in that dress."

"Yes, he's a handsome fellow," said Tulip, with a tinge of bitterness in his tone.

"But who is he?"

"You know him well enough. It's Angus Montgomery," Tulip replied.

Stoll started a little as the name fell upon his ears, and a smothered curse came through his thick, sensual lips.

Tulip, gazing intently after the two, did not notice his companion's agitation.

"Montgomery, eh?" Stoll said, dryly.

"Yes, the modern Cressus, the glass of fashion and the mold of form," Apollo and Hercules combined," said Tulip, sneeringly.

"I believe you are very well acquainted with him?" Stoll queried.

"Oh, yes! we were boys together."

"He's enormously rich, isn't he?"

"Yes. He's the son of a thrifty Scotchman, a petty store-keeper, who managed in some way to fascinate and marry the daughter of a French refugee, whom the Revolution drove to this country. The old Frenchman was rich, a nobleman, too, and this daughter was his only child. His name was Montgomery, and one of the conditions of the marriage was, that the father of this Angus should take his wife's family name instead of her taking his. Of course he acceded to that readily enough. When the old Frenchman died, all his money came to his daughter and her husband. A short time after Angus was born, his father died. Of course this Angus was a spoiled child; his mother never denied him any thing. When Angus was twenty, he lost his mother, and, at the age of twenty-one, he found himself one of the richest men in all New York. His father's thriftiness had more than doubled the immense fortune left by the old Frenchman."

"Did it turn his head at all, when he came into this property?"

"Oh, no!" Tulip replied, with a laugh.

"He accepted it as a matter of course. He had not been brought up to know the want of money."

"That is, he is a man born with a silver spoon in his mouth, as the saying is," Stoll said.

"Yes, only his spoon was a gold one."

"He knows how to take care of his money, too, I'm told."

"Yes, he's no fool."

"And this Miss Chauncy, is he engaged to her?"

Stoll, gazing after the handsome couple, did not notice the thrill of pain that shook Tulip's light form as the carelessly put question fell upon his ear.

"I—I really can not say," Tulip answered, slowly.

"Well, if one can judge by their manner toward each other, at any rate, they are lovers."

"Miss Chauncy is said to be something of a coquette."

"A coquette?"

"Yes, I believe it is so reported," Tulip replied.

"It would be just his luck to get her," said Stoll, coarsely. "These money-bags always marry each other."

"Well, he may get her, and then again he may not," Tulip observed, dryly.

Something in the tone of Tulip's voice attracted Stoll's attention. He turned from the masqueraders to his companion.

"Hallo! I fancy that—to use the popular saying—I smell a mice. Did you ever care for Miss Chauncy?"

Tulip winced at the question.

"Oh, don't be afraid to answer," Stoll continued. "If my suspicion is true, we are both in the same boat."

"What do you mean?" Tulip demanded.

"Why, that both of us have cause to hate this Angus Montgomery."

Tulip looked with wondering eyes upon Stoll. The broken voice was hoarse with passion as he uttered the words.

"And do you hate him?"

"No man in this world do I hate more bitterly," replied Stoll, angrily.

"And why so? Do you love this beautiful girl, Frances Chauncy?"

"Love!" exclaimed Stoll, in scorn, "love a woman, that strange compound of vanity and deceit? Oh, no! I like women well enough, until I tire of them, which is very

soon. But, as to hating any man on account of a woman— Well, when I do that, they can send me to the lunatic asylum."

"Why then do you hate him?"

"Tulip, I can't very well explain," said Stoll, in confusion; "but I do hate him, and I'd go a thousand miles and spend a thousand dollars to be revenged upon him."

"And so would I!" added Roche, firmly.

"I guessed right then about Miss Chauncy?"

"Yes, two months ago she gave me her word that she would be my wife."

"And she has broken that promise?"

"She has not yet told me so, but I feel sure, from what I have seen and heard, that she has. This Montgomery is the cause of it, and I'll be even with him, even if it costs me my life!"

Little did Montgomery know of the foes that were so near him.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORACLE'S WARNING.

"HAMLET" and "Morning" represented by Mr. Angus Montgomery and Miss Frances Chauncy, promenaded, gayly, down the room together.

As Tulip Roche had guessed—as all the fashionable world, who were making Newport their summer home, had said—the twain were lovers.

Chatting together, saying those "soft nothings," that are so sweet to lovers' ears, they made their way through the ever-changing groups of masqueraders.

Suddenly the two were confronted by a figure dressed all in white.

The form was that of a woman arrayed in a domino of white silk. A mask of the same hue and material concealed her face.

The hood of the domino being tightly drawn over her head, met the mask in front, so that no stray lock of hair could be seen.

The little hands of the woman were covered by white kid gloves. The tiny feet that peeped out from under the folds of the domino were incased in white boots.

All was white.

But through the snowy mask shone a pair of large, jet-black eyes, eyes full of life and fire.

The two halted, in astonishment, when they were confronted by the strange, white figure.

"Black and white are the hues of mourning, the emblems of grief; they do not look well together," said the figure in white, in a low voice, evidently disguised.

Montgomery did not like the words of the speaker. She plainly referred to his sable dress of Hamlet and the white robes representing "Morning," worn by Miss Chauncy.

"And who is it that stops our path with this remarkable observation?" said Montgomery, in a tone of banter, while the blonde beauty leaned heavily on his arm and looked at the slender, white figure before them in astonishment.

"Do you not see the color of my dress?"

"Yes."

"I am called THE WHITE WITCH!"

"The White Witch! indeed?"

"Yes I can tell of the past—"

"That is not difficult; history does the same."

"Speak also of the present."

"The daily newspaper is your rival there."

"And sometimes reveal the future," said the disguised figure, solemnly.

"Ah, now you are stating something wonderful," said Montgomery, laughing. He fancied that this extraordinary commencement was but the prelude to one of the usual masquerading jokes. "I suppose that if I cross your palm with silver, you will tell me all about my future life. Tell me whom I shall marry—how many times, and in fact, all the particulars?"

"Oh, I don't like fortune-tellers," said Miss Chauncy, petulantly, "they always say such horrid, disagreeable things."

"Do not fear, lady," said the White Witch, softly; "I can not tell your fortune."

"Only mine, then, eh?" said Montgomery, beginning to enjoy the joke.

"Yes, only yours."

"You see how highly favored I am by fortune!" exclaimed the young man, laughing, to his companion.

"Perhaps you will not think that you are highly favored when you hear the fate that is in store for you," said the White Witch, slowly and sadly.

"There, I knew it would be something disagreeable!" exclaimed the blonde beauty, in a tone of conviction.

"You have excited my curiosity, and now I am determined to hear what my fate is to be—that is, if you can tell me," said the young man, gayly.

"Within one month at most you will not doubt my power," replied the mysterious figure.

"That's right, pitch it strong, as my old music-master used to say," said Montgomery, laughing.

"You will follow me, then?"

"Where?"

"Only to the balcony. What I have to say to you must be spoken to your ear alone."

"It is absolutely necessary?"

"Yes," replied the seeress, decidedly.

"Have I your permission to leave you for a few moments?" Montgomery asked, speaking to the fair girl upon his arm. "I confess that this mysterious messenger from the other world has excited my curiosity."

"Certainly," replied the lady, withdrawing her arm from his.

"But wait a moment!" cried Montgomery, to the White Witch, who had turned to lead the way to the balcony, "are you sure that you know who I am?"



"Quite," responded the masked figure, promptly; "you are Mr. Angus Montgomery, and your companion is Miss Frances Chauncy."

"She does know us," said Montgomery, in the young girl's ear. "Can you guess who she is?"

"No, I do not think that I have ever heard her voice before," said the blonde beauty, slowly.

"I confess it puzzles me, for her voice is not familiar to me either," Montgomery said, thoughtfully.

"I am waiting," said the clear tones of the oracle.

"A thousand pardons," cried Montgomery, quickly; excuse me, please, for a few moments," he said to Frances, with a bow, then through the group of maskers he followed the mysterious figure, dressed all in white, to the balcony.

The clear rays of the summer moon shone down upon the balcony almost as light as day.

Montgomery's curiosity had been strangely excited by the mysterious announcement made by the "White Witch," as she had termed herself, and he was determined to carry out the joke, for such he considered it.

The balcony was almost deserted. A few couples only strolled up and down, enjoying the cool ocean breeze.

The White Witch led the way to a remote corner of the broad plaza, and there she halted.

Montgomery had followed her without hesitation.

"All things are fitting for a mystic disclosure," said the young man, gravely, as they halted. "It is the witching hour when churchyards yawn"—the moonbeams are shining full upon us, and I, with becoming gravity, wait to hear my fate."

"Would to heaven, Angus Montgomery, that other lips than mine could tell you of that fate," said the mysterious figure, in low and mournful tones.

In spite of himself, Montgomery was impressed by the tone in which she spoke.

For a moment the young man looked at the white figure before him in silent amazement, then at last he said:

"I am waiting to hear my fate."

"And you have no fear?"

"No, why should I fear?"

"Your past life has been all sunshine?"

"Yes."

"But in the future—"

"Well, what of the future?"

"The clouds of misfortune gather heavy around you?"

"So that the sun shines through the clouds in the end, what care I?" said Montgomery, firmly.

"At present you are happy?"

"Yes."

"And why are you happy?" asked the strange figure, earnestly.

"That is, possibly, a difficult question to answer."

"I will answer it for you."

"Do."

"In the first place you have plenty of money."

"That's the key-note to nearly all human hearts," said Montgomery, scornfully. "You are right to put money first."

"You have warm and devoted friends."

"Yes."

"One friend particularly, whom you love as a brother—Tulip Roche."

"Again you are right, Tulip is like a brother to me, and I think that—brother-like—he would peril his life to serve me," Montgomery said, quickly.

"Money and friendship—what else is wanting to complete your happiness?" asked the White Witch, significantly.

"Well, if you can not tell, you are not half a witch!" exclaimed the young man.

"Love."

"That is the answer."

"And you find that love in the heart of Frances Chauncy?"

"Now you are touching upon a delicate subject," said Montgomery, gravely. "Speak as you like about my money and my friends, but I would prefer that you should not mention Miss Chauncy. The relation that I bear in regard to that lady, is such that I can not permit her name to be made the subject of a masquerading jest."

"You will find that the jest is bitter, earnest truth, before many days are over," replied the masked woman, in solemn tones.

"I am really losing patience!" exclaimed Montgomery; "if you have ought to say to me, please say it at once, and let me return to the ballroom."

"I am speaking of the present that I may speak of the future. You are rich, beloved, happy?" questioned the sibyl.

"Yes."

"Now, listen to my words. Your riches will take to themselves wings and fly away; the friend that you have taken to your breast and cherished like a brother, will turn upon and sting you; the woman that you love will prove false to you. Wealth, friendship, love, all will desert you."

"What!" cried the young man, indignantly, and frown was upon the brow that the mask hid.

"Time will prove my words to be truth," said the White Witch, in a clear, firm voice.

"Lady, you are going altogether too far," and a trace of anger was in Montgomery's voice as he spoke; "too far even for a masquerading jest. I must stake my life upon the faith of the woman that I love."

"Oh, matchless folly!" exclaimed the mysterious woman, in a tone of scorn.

"Do you not know that all women are not angels—that some are as unstable as water, as fickle and as changeable as the wind?"

"And who are you that tell me this?" demanded Montgomery, astonished at her words and manner.

"I have already told you I am the White Witch. Whether I am your good genius or your evil angel, time alone will tell. I may be friend or I may be foe; but mark my words, within one month, or one year, you will lose wealth, friends and love. All will desert you. Frances Chauncy loves your money and your station; not you. When the blows fall thick and heavy upon your head, remember the words of the White Witch."

Then she glided from the balcony, and entered the ball-room. For a moment Montgomery paused in astonishment, then followed her; but she had disappeared.

CHAPTER III. FORMING THE LEAGUE.

YETTY Montgomery searched amid the groups that crowded the ball-room; the strange woman attired all in white was not to be found.

Montgomery was puzzled.

"This may be a joke," he muttered to himself, "but it is a very strange one."

A hand laid upon his shoulder interrupted the young man's meditations.

Turning, Montgomery saw at his side a tall figure dressed in the loose, white garb of a Pierrot—the French clown.

"Well, Montgomery, how are you enjoying yourself?" said a genial voice, coming from beneath the long, pointed nose of the white mask that the new-comer wore.

By the voice, Montgomery recognized who it was that addressed him.

"Is that you, O'Connell?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the other, removing his mask, and displaying the face of a man of thirty. The face was a bold and handsome one; regular in outline, clear red-and-white in color; lit up by a pair of full blue eyes; eyes so darkly blue that, at a few paces off, they looked like black. Crispy curls of a rich golden hue clustered around the shapely head. The broad, expansive forehead, and the firm-set, resolute mouth, showed both brains and will. There was a lurking devil in the large blue eye that told of man's fiery passions.

Lionel O'Connell—so the stranger in white was called—was no common man. An Irishman by birth, he had but lately come to the land that offers a home to the oppressed of every nation.

By profession, O'Connell was a writer, and was attached to the "staff" of a justly-celebrated daily newspaper.

The young Irishman wielded a brilliant and vigorous pen, and was already spoken of as one of the "rising men" of the "Fourth Estate," as the mighty men of the "press-gang" are termed.

There was a mystery, too, about O'Connell that served to attract attention to him. Of course every one was aware that his salary could not be large—for, as a general rule, there is more fame than money in the newspaper world—yet, somehow, he contrived to live in most excellent style. Always possessed of ample means, he spent his money with a lavish hand. None of the young "bloods" with whom he associated—for O'Connell had contrived to introduce himself into the first circles in New York—were more princely in their expenditures.

When questioned sometimes by some curious friend as to how he could afford to be so extravagant, he would laugh carelessly, and vaguely speak of his family estates across the water. And so at last it came to be currently believed that he was the heir to some vast property in Ireland, and that his present way of life was merely a whim, such as is often indulged in by men who are independent of the world.

So Lionel O'Connell, though a worker for his bread in the great hive of life known as New York city, was well received by men of breeding and of wealth, who scorned to sully their dainty fingers with the stains of toil.

O'Connell was a man who possessed wondrous powers of fascination. Men were attracted to him by some subtle instinct that they could neither understand nor resist. Young and beautiful women, the belles of the fashionable world, bestowed their sweetest smiles upon the dashing young Irishman. Yet he did not seem conscious of this power that he possessed, and often spoke with wonder of the ease with which he made friends.

A thorough good fellow—no man's enemy. Such was the opinion of the world.

"Yes," O'Connell replied to Montgomery's speech.

"I'm enjoying myself very well, but I'm a little puzzled just now."

"At what?" O'Connell asked.

"Listen and I'll tell you. I suppose that it's only a joke, but I don't like such jokes. As I was promenading with a lady a few minutes ago, I was accosted by a woman dressed all in white, who, in reply to my question, said she was called the White Witch. She asked for a few minutes' conversation with me alone. I followed her out on the balcony, and there she predicted that all sorts of misfortunes were going to come down thick and heavy upon my head. Mind you, this was all said in sober earnest; there didn't seem to be the least bit of a joke about it. Then she returned to the ballroom. I followed the moment after, but she had disappeared as suddenly as she appeared, and I can not find any trace of her."

"What were the evils with which she threatened you?" asked O'Connell, an earnest look in his eyes despite his efforts to appear unconcerned.

"The loss of wealth, of friends, and the woman I love."

O'Connell could not repress a slight start when Montgomery's words fell upon his ears.

"I see that you, too, are astonished," continued Montgomery.

"Yes, naturally so," replied the young Irishman, carelessly. "Did you not recognize this person?"

"No; she is, I think, a stranger to me. The voice was not familiar."

"Well, it is odd, to say the least," said O'Connell, thoughtfully.

"Yes; I'd give something to find out who it is."

"Oh, it's only a joke."

"Yes, but I don't like such jokes," Montgomery said, seriously. And as he spoke, he caught sight of the blonde beauty dressed as "Morning" coming toward him.

"Will you excuse me?" he said to O'Connell, hastily. "I see that I am wanted."

Then Montgomery joined Miss Chauncy, and drawing her arm in his, was soon lost to the eyes of O'Connell in the crowd.

Miss Chauncy was quite eager to know what the strange white mask had said to her lover, but Montgomery evaded the question. He did not tell the blonde beauty of the strange prediction of the White Witch.

After Montgomery left him, O'Connell remained motionless for a few moments, absorbed in thought. It was evident that his musings were not pleasant ones, for a shadow was on his face.

"I can not understand it," he muttered, at length. "The words of the White Witch are strange to Montgomery, but doubly so to me, that am behind the curtain. Is it merely a masquerading joke, without meaning, or has some unknown power guessed the secret thoughts—not even yet translated into words—that are swelling in my brain? It must be a coincidence. How could any one guess my purpose? I have not yet begun to lay the train by which the mine is to be exploded. I must to work, though, at once. Now for my tools; the hands who are to do the work that my brain plans."

Then his eyes fell upon two masqueraders standing together near the wall and apart from the dancers.

"There they are," he said, and a smile came over his face. "The two who in serving their own ends, serve mine. We three, separate, are powerless; together, with my head to guide, we are a host."

O'Connell replaced his mask and walked slowly over to where the two stood that he had noticed.

They were Tulip Roche and Herman Stoll.

The two, busy in conversation, did not notice the approach of O'Connell.

Just as O'Connell came up, Montgomery and Miss Chauncy, arm in arm, chatting gaily together, walked past.

"There they go again," said Stoll, and a muttered curse against Montgomery was smothered by the mask that covered his lips.

"A pretty couple," said O'Connell, in his easy way, coming quite close to the two.

"Hallo, Con!" exclaimed Stoll, in his coarse way. He had recognized the voice of the Irishman.

"I say that they are a very pretty couple," repeated O'Connell.

"Who?" said Stoll.

"Why, the two that you just referred to, Mr. Angus Montgomery and Miss Frances Chauncy. Don't you agree with me? If you don't, Stoll, I am sure that Tulip here will. Every one knows how like brothers he and Angus are, and of course, brother-like, he thinks the world of Miss Chauncy. I suppose you will act as Angus' best man, eh, Tulip?"

Had the mask been torn, suddenly, from the face of Tulip Roche, the action would have revealed features white with rage.

But Tulip's secret was hid by the mask, so he held his place and said nothing.

"Montgomery is a lucky fellow, isn't he?" continued O'Connell. "Rich as an Astor, handsome as a picture, and loved by an angel in the guise of this blonde beauty, what else is wanting to complete his happiness?"

"You speak of the fellow as if he were a god," said Stoll, loweringly.

"I have only spoken truth, given one side of the picture. Told of Angus Montgomery, rich and beloved. I have not yet said anything about his three enemies, now standing in this ball-room, who will pull him down from his pinnacle of triumph, give his money to the winds and tear from him the love of the woman that he fondly fancies is all his own."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Stoll, in astonishment, and Tulip's eyes, too, asked the question.

"Exactly what I say," replied O'Connell, coolly. "That Angus Montgomery has three deadly enemies standing almost within ear-shot of him. Three men who will rob him of every thing that he holds dear in this world."

Tulip and Stoll looked at each other in wonder.

For a moment there was silence. The two seemed to be considering the strange words of O'Connell.

"Montgomery has three enemies?" said Stoll.

"Yes," replied O'Connell.

"Who are they?"

"The first is called Tulip Roche; the second, Herman Stoll; and the third, Lionel O'Connell."

The two men started as though they had received an electric shock when the Irishman pronounced their names.

"What the deuce do you mean, Con?" asked Stoll, hastily. "I am not aware that I am an enemy of Mr. Montgomery."

"Nor I," said Tulip, slowly.

"Gentlemen, let us lay our cards upon the table; it is better that we should see each other's hand, for we must play partners and not against each other in this game," said O'Connell, coolly. "I, for one, hate this Angus Montgomery; you hate him, too, Stoll, and you, too, Tulip, although you may deny it."

"Why should I hate him?" asked Stoll, bluntly.

"Because he has beaten you with your own weapons and at your own game. He now holds a rod of terror over your head. You are to see him to-night and compromise the matter if possible."

Stoll hung his head, abashed. O'Connell had spoken but the truth.

"And now, you, Tulip; you hate him because he has won the love of Frances Chauncy from you. She gave you her word that she would become your wife; she has broken that word. And I hate this man because I hate him; a woman's reason. I propose to you, gentlemen, a league of three, the object of which shall be to ruin this Montgomery. You, Stoll, shall have the money back that this man is going to wring from you; Tulip, you shall have Frances Chauncy, and I will have nothing but revenge; that will content me. What say you, gentlemen? Alone, we are powerless to injure him; united we will humble this Angus Montgomery even to the dust. Come, decide. Shall we three fight this one man?"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 46.)

The Phantom Princess: OR, Ned Hazel, the Boy Trapper.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS,
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Bear-tamer of the Rocky Mountains.

CHAPTER X. DOOMED.

It was like the fabled siren of old. Hugh Bandman seemed literally powerless to resist the impulse to approach that wonderful personage known as the Phantom Princess.

The voice, naturally of the tenderest sweetness, had every accessory to make it impressive in the highest degree. The silent river, with the somber woods on every hand, the silvery moonlight, and the mystery, which superstition had thrown about her; all these, added to the peculiarly nervous condition of the trapper, tended to heighten what at any time would have produced a powerful effect.

Bandman, as I said, piled his paddle as he had never piled it before. It was with the feeling that he would overtake and look more clearly upon her face, even if it cost him his life.

He saw, too, after going a short distance in this furious manner, that he was really gaining upon the Princess—very slowly, it is true, but unmistakably nevertheless. She, too, was using her oar with extraordinary power, and the two boats shot forward with surprising velocity.

The canoes were as near the center of the stream as might be, and each was heading

straight down the river. Despite the extraordinary efforts of the fugitive, the voice seemed to float over the waters with undiminished sweetness.

All at once it changed—changed so suddenly and so radically as to be startling. The sad, plaintive character was lost, and it took an exultant, joyous strain, as if the singer was triumphant over some trouble that had long distressed her.

Different as it was in every respect, except in the wonderful sweetness of its tones, it had, if possible, a far more powerful attraction to be maddened, pursuer. Had she really desired him to overtake her, she could scarcely have taken a surer means of doing it; for the distance now steadily diminished until less than fifty yards separated them, and every thing indicated a speedy termination of the race.

At this juncture an alarming phase of the contest manifested itself. Had a person stood upon shore, and watched the two boats, he would have discovered a third, some distance in the rear of the second. This was much larger than either, and in it were seated five Blackfoot warriors of the fiercest and most treacherous character.

The trapper saw them not, and if he had, he scarcely would have heeded them; but they were drawing near him, with the swift, stealthy, and sure approach of the panther upon its sleeping victim.

Was the Princess growing weary?

Certainly her stroke was losing its quick elasticity, and her pursuer was gaining at a faster rate than before. Bandman even began to slacken his own speed, so as not to overtake her too rapidly.

Sure now of coming up with the mysterious woman, a strange fluttering took possession of the trapper. Long years of danger, and severe mental suffering, had given him a stoicism and mastery over his emotions, such as a Blackfoot himself might have coveted, but he was now swayed by feeling such as he had not known for a long, long time.

"Strange! strange! can it be?" he kept muttering, leaning forward, and straining his vision to get a nearer view of the female.

He had discovered some time before that there was a second figure in the boat, but he paid no heed to that. His whole attention and mind were centered upon her—her—the Phantom Princess.

Stroke by stroke he advanced, until scarcely a score of feet separated the two boats. Then the trapper paused rowing, in doubt what was best for him to do.

She had ceased singing and paddling, and sat motionless in her boat, quietly contemplating him, with turned head and motionless arms.

At the same time that Bandman stopped his efforts, the Indians, a hundred yards in the rear, did the same, and began stealing along, nearer and nearer, resembling still more the insidious approach of the panther to its unconscious victim.

Bandman was sitting motionless, scarcely knowing what to do, and yet gradually drawing nearer, when the Phantom Princess spoke.

"Why have you pursued me?"

"To find out who you are," was the instant response of the trapper, who appeared to rouse from his spell by the voice of the charmer.

"Have you never heard of me before?"

"I have heard you called Phantom Princess. Do you live among the Indians?"

"I saw you and your friends at our village the other day, when you came after furs."

"Were you there?" continued Hugh, his earnestness making his questions more pointed than otherwise they would have been.

"I sat in my lodge, with my daughter, and we watched you until you went away."

"Why did you not let us see you?"

"We are seen—or I am only seen—at night, by your people."

"That is a strange fancy—may I ask why it is?"

"You will learn before you return."

There was a significance in these words which Hugh Bandman would have noticed at any other time; but, half-wild with all sorts of conflicting thoughts, he was in doubt at times whether he was acting in a dream or a reality.

Scarcely without knowing it himself, Bandman was so toying with his paddle, that he was drifting closer and closer to the white canoe. Close as he already was, he was unable to gain any thing like a fair view of her face and features, as she held them shaded in such a way that it was impossible.

There was a wild, maddening, distracting suspicion still controlling and urging the trapper onward. More than once the deciding question was upon his tongue, but he forced it back.

"You are a long ways from your home," said he.

"I have been many miles further," she answered, "and have never yet lost my way."

"You are not a Blackfoot; you have once lived somewhere else among civilized people. How long have you been with the Indians?"

This question was unanswered. For some reason or other, the Princess declined to say anything at all. Her silence first reminded the trapper that he was asking some questions without any authority, and with little regard to propriety.

Still, in a certain sense, he was desperate, and he continued:

"May I ask your name?"

"You mentioned it yourself a few minutes ago."

"The Phantom Princess is a title—not a name."

"It is the only one by which I am known among the white people and my adopted kindred."

"Have you your daughter with you?"

"I have—her name is Miona."

"A beautiful Indian name—are you now returning to your home in the village?"

"I am."

"May I go with you?"

"You must go!"

"What?"

At that instant, Hugh Bandman heard the splash of a paddle, and in alarm turned his head—but it was too late. The five Indians were upon him, all armed to the teeth, and ready to riddle him at the first show of resistance.

He saw this and quickly submitted to the inevitable; but, he turned toward her with the simple question:

"Did you do this?"

"Yes," was the reply of the Phantom Princess, as she caught up her paddle and dashed away almost with the speed of a swallow. And then her laughter, rippling,

joyous and musical as ever, came back to him across the water.

"Poor thing, she is crazy!" muttered Bandman, as he gazed after the swift-vanishing canoe; "and I have been the fool to follow her in a wild, unreasonable belief that she was another person."

CHAPTER XI. IN THE TRAP.

WHEN Hugh Bandman heard the avowal of the Phantom Princess, he had not the least doubt of her insanity, and at the same time he felt a disgust at the part he had played in a farce which now bid fair to become a tragedy.

"Why had not Mack and I brains enough to take a common-sense view of the matter?" he asked himself, "and why was I such a consummate fool as to imagine such a thing possible, that they two could be one?"

But, his situation was so serious as to demand his attention and thoughts. He saw how the cunning female had lured him on to his own destruction, and then exiting at her work, had hid away, leaving him with his captors.

"She must be insane, and must hold a powerful influence over these Indians; that doubtless is the reason she is called a princess, and then her way of dressing in white and painting her canoe that color, and her extraordinary skill in handling the paddle, has given her the name of the Phantom Princess among the superstitious hunters and trappers of this region."

Then he suddenly thought of the company of North-west trappers that had gone ahead of him to this village. "What had become of them? Most likely, after finding that they had been outwitted, they had continued on down the river, knowing it was too late to return, and overtake the offending party that had discomfited them."

Again his thoughts came back to her who was the cause of this calamity of his.

"There is a method in insanity, and there must have been some powerful cause to turn her mind in this direction. She must have received some terrible wrong at the hands of her people to cause her to turn with such implacable hatred upon them."

"Who can she be?"

"She would not give me her name. All I know is that she has a child with her, whom she claims as her daughter. Where, then, is the father of the girl? Can it be that his treatment of her was such as to change her feelings toward all her race, and to cause so many innocent to suffer?"

"So it seems to me," he added, as he continued the train of thought—"Sh!"

A slight rustling caused him to turn his head; the Phantom Princess was before him!

CHAPTER XII.

FACE TO FACE IN THE DEATH-LODGE.

HUGH BANDMAN sprung to his feet, and confronted the woman who had entered the lodge. He was pale, and quivering like an aspen, while she stood as immobile as a statue of ice. He stared like a man who had lost his senses. His breath came through his closed teeth as though he were choking. He could only gasp, "My heavens!" and then he sunk back senseless upon the skins behind him.

The Phantom Princess still did not stir. She was dressed in the same white, ghostly robes, and her large dark eyes were fixed upon him, as though they would pierce him through and through.

In a few minutes his strong nature reasserted itself, and he roused up again. Rising to a sitting position, he groaned:

"Oh, Myra! Myra! do I dream, or is it you indeed?"

Then she spoke, in the low, terrible tones of intense passion:

"Yes, it is I, Myra—she whom you once called your wife. I am not crazy, as you imagine. I saw you when you came with the party the other day; I knew you; I felt that my day of revenge had come. Providence had opened the way, and I knew that you would be thrown into my power. I followed you; I drew you on—and you are here; and when you leave this place, you go to your death!"

While she was speaking, she stood with hand uplifted, as though pronouncing judgment upon him. He could only reach his arms imploringly toward her, and moan his agony, which was too great for words.

Your perfidy toward me has caused me to hate the face of all my race; and now hate of a dozen years is all centered upon YOU. It is I who brought you here—it is I who will delight in your suffering and death; let that thought fill your last moments upon earth. I now bid you goodbye!"

With the air of an empress, she turned to walk out. She had reached the entrance, when the miserable man found his voice.

"Myra, wait one moment!"

"Well?" she said, pausing and half-turning round, but making no motion to return.

"Come back, I command you; you must listen to me!"

"I can hear what you have to say without coming nearer you."

"If you are in your right mind, tell me—tell me, I implore—why you left me in London."

"Tell you why I left you?" she repeated, her whole being consumed with scorn. "Why do you ask such an idle question? Must I refer to the time when you won my heart—when I gave you my love, and when I stood beside you at the altar, secretly but lawfully married, as I believed, in obedience to a request of yours; and then, when I discovered, a week later, that you had deceived me—that I was not your wife—can you wonder that I fled from you as from a pestilence?"

"Was that why you left me?"

"Was that a thousand reasons? Disgraced, dishonored, was I to remain in London, with no friend in the world? No; God restrained me from suicide, but I left the country forever; I came upon my uncle's vessel to Fort Churchill; there I remained until my daughter was born, and then I fled into the woods. I found my way, after many weary days and nights of suffering, to these people. They had pity upon me; they treated me kindly, and with them I have lived ever since, and with them I expect to die. I have befriended no white man—none excepting Nick Whiffles, who is different from others of his race, and who was so kind to me that I can feel no hatred toward him."

"But I am the enemy of all others, and to no one am I such an enemy as to you. You are now in my power; you have tasted of woman's love, and now you shall taste of a woman's hate!"

Singularly enough, Hugh Bandman was now quite cool and self-possessed. It was an unnatural calm, but it was a calm nevertheless.

"Myra, before bidding each other farewell," said he, as he leaned upon his elbow, "we may as well understand each other. I will answer any question you may propose, and will you do the same for me?"

"Let me hear them," she replied, standing as motionless as before, but the picture of the intensest excitement.

"By what means did you learn that you were not my wife?"

"What matters it how I learned it, so that I did learn it?"

"You have not answered me. Was it through Richard McCabe?"

"It was."

"What proof did he give you?"

"He brought me a note from the man who had acted the part of minister in marrying us. He repented the part he had played in being your agent, and begged me to do what I could not—forgive him."

"You did not see the man, Mr. Dumfries, himself?"

"He had not the courage to show his face

—so he sent the note; that told all—was not that enough?"

"Did it never occur to you that Mr. Dumfries did not write or send you the note?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"To be brief, then, Mr. John Dumfries was a regularly-ordained minister of the Church of England; you are my lawful wife, and he never sent you a note or a word to the contrary."

"But I have the note with me," said she, turning about, and walking toward him.

"Let me see it," said Bandman, with that same wonderful coolness of manner, as he reached out his hand for it.

She hesitated for a moment, and then, walking a step or two nearer, flung it at him, as though she could not trust herself to approach any nearer.

"Were I in a civilized country, I would not trust you with it, but it can make no difference now."

Hugh Bandman picked up the folded bit of paper, and opened it. It had been carefully preserved, and he read it without difficulty. When he had finished, he folded it up again and threw it toward her.

"Just what you expected—that is in the handwriting of Richard McCabe, and he wrote it on purpose to destroy your happiness and mine."

"I will not believe it—it can not be true!" was the impetuous exclamation of the Phantom Princess, advancing still closer.

"Somehow or other, I have always fancied that you and I would meet again in this life, and I have always gone prepared for it, as you will shortly perceive. Listen, then, Myra, to a few words of mine."

"Richard McCabe was an admirer and lover of yours, before I saw you. He did all he could to win you, but failing in that, he sought to prevent our marriage. He went to you, with whisperings against me, but you scorned him; he came to me, with insinuations against you, and I thrust him out of the house. I thought that that was the last of him, so far as concerned us, but it was not. A week after our marriage, I came home one evening to find that you had fled. You had left no word of explanation behind you, so that I had not the slightest suspicion of why or where you had gone. I could only believe that you had gone off in some mental aberration, and a number of the best detectives were put upon your track. They learned nothing of what had become of you, and I came to the conclusion that you were dead in the Thames."

"Not the slightest suspicion of the true cause of your absence had come to me. My marriage was a secret from my friends, for the simple reason that I lacked a few months of reaching my majority, and was not yet legally my own master. A few of my intimate friends were in the secret, and one evening when McCabe was rather the worse for the wine he had drunk, he said something that roused the most dreadful suspicion in my mind. I could not get much out of him, but enough to satisfy me that you were hiding somewhere, under the belief that I had done you some great wrong."

"The few words that I got from him, were uttered accidentally. When he was himself I taxed him with it, but he had no recollection of what he had said, and denied all knowledge of you in the most solemn manner. Nevertheless his appearance convinced me of his guilt, and I employed a man to watch him."

"McCabe did not know at this time whether you had gone, but he had a suspicion, and he discovered it at last, and he followed you. When my man found that he had embarked for North America in one of the Hudson Bay Company ships, he became satisfied that you had done the same some weeks before."

"When he told me this, I remembered you had an uncle who was the captain of one of their vessels, and there could no longer be any doubt of the direction you had taken. Providence would have suggested that I wait until his return, and learn the truth from him, but that would have necessitated a delay of several months which would have driven me mad, so I set sail in the very next vessel that left for this country."

"We encountered the 'Albatross' as we entered Baffin's Bay, and I went on deck and saw your uncle. He told me his lips were sealed, and refused to answer me any questions at all, even after I had made him understand that you had been deceived."

"I had no doubt at all that you were at Fort Churchill, but I did hope to gain some particulars of him; but I did not, and so we separated."

"While entering Hudson's Bay, we were caught in a tempest and wrecked. We lived on that barren coast for several months, and then were picked up and carried to Ungava. It was then a long time before I could get across to Fort Churchill."

"I succeeded at last—but when I reached the place, a year and more had passed since you left London."

"At Fort Churchill, I learned that you had been there, and that a child had been born. You had received the kindest treatment, but when the worst, beautiful summer came, you had escaped and fled no one knew whither."

"McCabe was dead; the miserable man had followed you to Fort Churchill—but one day, when hunting near the fort, he got caught in a snow-storm, and perished within a hundred yards of the gate of the fort."

"Then I set out to hunt for you. For two years, I never ceased my search, except for a few hours, when exhausted nature compelled me to do so."

"The end of it all was that I learned nothing at all of you, and I agreed with Mackintosh, who knew my secret, that you and your child had perished somewhere in the wilderness. He wished me to return to England, as he thought the change would benefit me; but, life had now lost its charms for me, and I was willing to die here. I refused to go, and engaged as an ordinary trapper under him."

"Thus I have been employed ever since. Once or twice, during the past five years, I heard of the Phantom Princess, but no suspicions of her identity came to me, until within the past few days. This is the first time I ever accompanied Mackintosh to this village, and when I saw you, I thought it barely possible that you might be my long-lost wife. You know what has followed."

"During this narration, Myra had remained standing in the same immovable, statue-like position, while Bandman sat upon the pile of skins, talking as calmly as though he were discussing some ordinary business matter. He now rose to his feet and advanced nearer."

"That you may not doubt my word, I have always carried the proof with me."

With which, he drew a package from his

inner breast-pocket, and handed it to her. She took it mechanically and opened it.

She read it carefully, and saw that it was a legal certificate of her marriage, properly witnessed, and signed by Rev. Mr. Dumfries, who had officiated in the capacity of minister at the time.

All this she saw. Then that wild, fierce light, born of long-suffering and hate, died out, and in its stead, came a deadly pallor to the face—the pallor of despair. A cry bubbled up from her lips like that of a mother over her lost darling. Her arm, outstretched, moved to and fro as if to dissolve some horrid vision, and her staring eyes glared in their intense gaze on vacancy, as she wailed:

"Doomed—doomed! and by my act! Oh, Hugh—darling Hugh! My hand has brought him to this—my hand!" she sobbed, holding out before her that beautiful white hand.

"He never wronged me—he loved me all through these dreadful years—he sought me out in these wilds to say that he loved me, and I lured him on—on to the Death Lodge—to the Death Lodge—I, his wife!"

The hand moved in the air again; then she stood like one frozen in her sorrow, still as the dead, for a moment only, then dropped to the ground as one dead indeed.

Her husband sprung toward her and lifted her head upon his lap. Fondly he kissed the lips again and again, pressed the head to his breast, and while his eyes rained tears, murmured:

"My wife—my own darling wife—united again, after all these long, cruel years. Myra, my own—my dearest. Poor, deceived Myra! I forgive all, and with Death staring me in the face, I plead for your love."

Opening her eyes, she looked yearningly at him for a moment, and then reaching up her arms closed them about his neck.

"My husband!"

Their hearts were too full to speak further, and for several minutes they could only mingle their tears. Then they sat side by side and talked for a few moments, when Myra said:

"You are condemned to death, dearest Hugh; there is no escape for you, but I will die with you; that at least shall be my expiation. Oh, the wrong I have done! Alas, that now that I have found out what life is, it should be so soon ended!"

"Perhaps there is happiness yet for us; you are free to move about, without question; go and see Nick Whiffles."

"I will do so, at once!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet. "He shall save you—save you, Hugh! God has sent him to this wilderness for this work—to save you, my husband!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 45.)

ORPHAN NELL,

The Orange-Girl:

OR,
THE LOST HEIR OF THE LIVINGSTONES.

A ROMANCE OF CITY LIFE.

BY AGILE PENNE.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MASQUERADE BALL AT THE ACADEMY.

"You settled that fellow speedily," said Vanderwilt, in admiration of the scientific manner in which my friend, Joe the "Spider," had disposed of the rough."

"You bet!" said Joe, emphatically; "we handle some pretty rough customers out in the mines, sometimes, and a man's got to know how to hit out, to travel far in the diggins."

Clark, the "secretary," the wily agent of Livingstone, looked crestfallen at the failure of the first attack, and uttered never a word as we made our way to the omnibus."

As we rode down-town, I could see that Clark was busy thinking—probably revolving over in his mind what scheme to try next to gain possession of the precious will that the savant, Vanderwilt, carried on his person. I watched him closely, and soon I saw that his brow, clouded over with the shades of depression, black as night, began to grow lighter; then a faint smile appeared around the corners of his lips, treacherous-looking lips. He had conceived a scheme to defeat him. I must be my guard, then, the next day to myself, for at twelve on the morrow I was to be at the post-office to meet Nell, the girl of my heart. I had but little doubt that she would get the letter I had written to her from Buffalo, and keep the appointment I had made."

Now, my object was to keep close to Vanderwilt, and thus prevent this "Mr. Clark" or his confederates from robbing him."

Of course Clark had no suspicion that either Joe or myself knew his "little game"—how should he? Both Joe and I were strangers to him; he could not possibly guess, for a single moment, that we knew the mission on which he had been dispatched by Richard Livingstone, or that we were determined to prevent him from accomplishing that mission. In this I had the advantage. He thought his object was unknown, whereas I knew it as well as he did. The row in the depot, in which Joe polished off his confederates so handsomely, looked only as the result of accident. He, of course, could not think that it was a well-laid plan on the part of Joe and myself to prevent his associates from robbing the savant. But now the question was, what little dodge would he try next, since his first scheme had failed?"

We reached the hotel, registered our names, and then went in to dinner."

Dinner over, our rooms were allotted to us. Clark, of course, had his already, and one picked out and saved for Vanderwilt; then we ascended in the "elevator"—the convenient machine that saves going up stairs—to the third story. Luckily for my plans, we were all located on the same story. As I had suspected, Clark had picked out the room next to his own for Vanderwilt, and a door led from one into the other—a nice little arrangement for Mr. "Secretary," truly."

After we had examined our rooms, Clark sent for a bottle of champagne, and extended a cordial invitation for us to join him in a social glass in his room. Of course we accepted."

The wine brought, we fell to discussing that and the current topics of the day."

"By the way," said the savant, "what do these flaming hand-bills of the 'Wickedest Man in New York' mean, that I see about the streets?"

"They have reference to one John Allen, who keeps a sailors' dance-house, in Water street," replied Clark.

"Well, is the man really so bad?"

"No," responded Clark; "there are twenty others just as bad as he. It's all a money-making scheme. A monthly magazine wants to get up a sensation—something to make it sell. To this end it is necessary to get everybody to talk about it. Some publishers achieve that by large and persistent advertising, but that costs a great deal of money. The great study of all good business men in this world is to have their business advertised without costing them any thing. That was the idea of the publisher I speak of. He employed an able writer—one of that class of writers called sensational—to write up some subject which would instantly attract the public's attention, and also be mentioned gratuitously by every journal in the country. Who selected the subject, this John Allen—whether it was publisher or author—I, of course, don't know; but the article, headed the 'Wickedest Man,' was a decided success. Nearly every daily paper in the country copied portions of the article. The result was that it rushed the sale of the magazine up enormously; to use the popular expression, it went like 'hot cakes,' and John Allen, the keeper of a common sailors' dance-house in Water street—a place neither better nor worse than a dozen others of the same class—became notorious. Everybody was talking about the 'Wickedest Man in New York'; hundreds rushed down to see the dance-house and the 'soiled doves,' its inmates, who decoyed and fleeced poor 'Jack.' Of course Allen, the keeper, liked it at first, because it brought custom to his den; for it is a den, though, from the illustrations and descriptions in some of the weekly papers, one would be apt to imagine it a palace. Then this man pretended a sort of half-piety as though a man could serve Heaven and the devil at the same time, and thus the case stands. His place was filled to overflowing every night, and quite a number used to go there in the daytime, but Allen, just now, is beginning to grumble because, he says, the prayer-meetings don't pay; so he has put back the girls and the liquor, and entices the poor sailors, just the same as before. By the way, we'll go down there some night if you like, and you can see for yourself."

"I should be pleased to go," replied Vanderwilt.

This little description, by Mr. Clark, of the Water street den, rather increased my opinion of his cleverness. He was a man of brains, though working for evil, not for good. I felt that I needed all my shrewdness, or he would beat me in the game we were playing."

"By-the-by, Mr. Vanderwilt," said Clark, "did you ever go to a masquerade ball?"

"No," replied the savant; "I have never attended one."

"The Arion Society give a grand masquerade to-night at the Academy of Music. We have nothing else to do; suppose we go?" said Clark.

"I think it's a good idea. What do you say, gentlemen?" said Vanderwilt.

Both Joe and I signified an assent to the proposition.

"I had better go, then, and make arrangements for costumes," said Clark. "What dress would you like, Mr. Vanderwilt?"

"Well, I haven't the slightest idea. What do you think, Mr. James?" asked the savant.

"I think a monk's dress—a plain domino, because it's no trouble, and you can put it on over your own citizen's dress and save changing," I said.

"That is a capital idea!" cried Vanderwilt.

"Shall I get your dominos for you, gentlemen? I can as well as not!" added Clark.

I thanked him kindly for the offer, but declined it. I knew at once that this visit to the masquerade concealed some trap, and I did not choose that he should select two conspicuous dominos for Joe and myself, as I knew he would, thus to be able to mark us for his confederates. I had resolved to wear plain black. I felt sure that twenty others there would be dressed the same, and in the crowd it would be hard work to tell one black domino from another."

After a little more conversation, Clark and I started to walk down the street to get our tickets and dresses. I left Joe with Vanderwilt, with strict injunctions to keep his eyes open during my absence. I did not fear, however, that Clark and his confederates would attempt any thing before night. I felt assured the next plan would be developed at the masquerade; what it would be, however, I could not guess as yet, but I felt I must trust to my wits to detect it when they began to put it in operation."

Clark and I walked down Broadway as far as the corner of Broome street. There we parted; he went up Broome street, to visit a customer, and I remained on the corner a few minutes to make sure that he would not return to spy upon my footsteps. Then I crossed over to the other side of the street, went up stairs, and knocked at the door of the office of my friend, John Peters, the Detective. Peters opened the door in person. He knew me in an instant."

"You're just the man I wanted to see!" he cried, as he grasped me warmly by the hand and drew me inside the door."

"Well, I'm glad of that," I answered.

"I couldn't very well write to you, because you told me in your letter from Denver City, that you were going up the mountains, so I was waiting to hear from you again."

"What is it—any good news?" I asked.

"Oh! not much, only this." He went to the little desk in the office, and from one of the pigeon-holes took out a large yellow envelope. From this envelope he took a folded paper, opened it, and at the bottom of the paper showed me the seal of the State of New York and the clerical signature of the Governor. It was my pardon!"

I tell you, my heart gave a great leap when my eyes took in the contents of that little sheet of paper. It was life and liberty to me. Now, once again, I could walk the streets of my native city without having the dismal fear that a blue-coated Metropolitan, or a bird of prey in the shape of a private detective, would be tapping me on the shoulder with the polite but significant intimation—"I want you!"

Warmly I wrung Peters' hands in my joy.

"Thank you, John," I cried. "I can never repay this service."

"Yes, you can; if not to me, to some one else," he replied. "It may be in your power one of these days to help a fellow-creature by helping him pay the service I have done you; that's the way I look at it. We were all put in this world to aid one another; that's my doctrine."

"And a good, sound one it is, too; but, tell me, how did you contrive to procure this pardon?"

"Oh! it was simple enough. I am very well acquainted with a prominent politician, who wields great influence in the politics of the State, and through him the work was done."

Again I thanked him, and then I proceeded to tell him of what had occurred during my absence."

Peters listened to my story with attention. He was particularly pleased when I told him how I became heir to the gold left by "English Bob," and of my discovery of all the proofs needed to give to Salome Livingstone the fortune now held and enjoyed by the half-brother, Richard. I also told him of the "secretary," Mr. Clark, who had met Vanderwilt and myself at the depot; of my conviction that he intended to rob Vanderwilt of the precious will at the masquerade ball at the Academy of Music that was to take place that evening."

Peters thought for a moment.

"I tell you what it is," he said; "I haven't any thing particular to do just now. Suppose I take a hand in this 'little game.'"

"The very favor I would have asked!" I cried.

"All right; I'm your man! Hank and I—Hank Henry, my partner, you know—will be on hand at this masquerade ball to-night. I don't agree with you in one thing, though; I don't think they'll try the dodge there, because, if he carries this will in a breast-pocket, it will be difficult for them to get at it. Their plan will probably be, to get him away somewhere to take some supper, or something of that sort, and then 'fix' him. You see, the reason for going to the masquerade is, that in the crowd they can easily separate him from you and your friend."

I could not help saying that this appeared to me to be reasonable."

"I think so," he replied. "Now, Hank and I will watch outside, so that, if they do separate him from you, and try to run him off to some other place, why, we'll be down on them, sharp as needles. What do you think of my plan?"

"It is excellent," I replied.

"I think it will hold water, as the English say," he said, quietly.

"And the moment we settle this will business, I shall bring suit against Livingstone to force him to vacate the property."

"That's your game!" cried Peter, emphatically. "I think you stand a chance to win, now."

"I hope so," I replied.

"You'll start for the Academy about nine o'clock, won't you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Very well; Hank and I will be on guard there at nine precisely."

So, with a parting grasp of the hand, I left Peters' office. I went instantly to a customer's on Broome street, and got a couple of black dominos for Joe and myself, then bought a couple of tickets for the masquerade."

So far, all had gone well. Could I but foil Richard's plans to gain possession of the will, and manage to have it destroyed, I would ask for nothing better. To-morrow, too, I should meet Nell, the blue-eyed witch, whose sweet face haunted my slumbers—Nell, who was to be the angel of my life."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. CLARK'S "LITTLE GAME."

I RETURNED at once to the hotel. I found that Clark had already got back and was seated in the office talking with Vanderwilt and Joe."

"Did you get your dominos, Mr. James?" he asked.

"Yes, I have them."

"Did you think to get any masks?"

"No, I didn't."

"Oh! we must have some masks by all means," cried Vanderwilt; "we must be disguised for a masquerade, or else there wouldn't be any fun."

"That's so," chimed in Joe.

"Suppose, Mr. James," said Clark, "that we take a walk up Broadway and get some masks. We have plenty of time before supper."

"Certainly," I replied; "I'm agreeable; let's be off at once."

So, up Broadway Mr. Clark and I started. I noticed that, as we walked up the street, Clark kept his eyes on ahead, as though he was looking for some one. I kept close watch upon him. I was playing a difficult game, and it was necessary that

demigod, at the very least, for who but a more than human man could breathe such perfect devotion to woman? who render her such touchingly, tender tribute?

Then she had met him, and loved! This morning, too, before the time-honored festival of St. Valentine, she was deciding to send him an anonymous valentine, because her very heart ached with the wish that his hand, his eye might rest, if but for a moment, upon something she had freighted with her kisses.

So they lay around her, the fair silver and golden-winged court messengers of Cupid, ready to do any bidding assigned.

"From Ormsby's, Jones, you brought them?"

She glanced at the man as he brought in the steaming chicken fricassee.

Then, after a careful examination, she selected one; an exquisitely elegant silver page, with a faint azure hue near the center, that took a gradual form of interlaced hearts, grasped by a tiny little hand, with a ring on the finger. Underneath was written, in a faultlessly beautiful hand, the words: "Je vous aime. M'aimez-vous?"

"I have heard that Mr. Clyde greatly admires Italian penmanship. Let me try to address this like the inscription within, both because he likes it, and to mislead him."

So the fated valentine went on its way, and several hours later Gordon Van Blascum sent to her; he who had made up his mind, long ago, when Sophy Blair's wealth failed her, to seek to win this beautiful icicle.

This Valentine's day, the witching time, sacred to love and love's successes, was the season that Gordon Van Blascum had selected to tell Geneva St. Cyril his—we will not call it love—his purposes.

It was a model love-letter she read that morning, wherein her suitor pleaded nobly and boldly; then when she laid it in a perfumed box, and remembered he was to come for his answer on the morrow evening, she smiled as she thought how she despised him when she compared him with Vernon Clyde.

So she waited for a chance answer from her valentine; and Gordon Van Blascum waited for the news that should forever set him at rest on the wife and wealth question.

Vernon Clyde's light, pleasant apartment was cheerful even in the gloom of a driving snow-storm. The grate held a crackling fire in its iron grasp; the carpet grew redder and brighter in the glow; the elegant chairs and sofa looked the very impersonation of comfort, as they certainly were of grace and style; and at his desk, his head bent between his hands, Vernon Clyde sat, earnestly gazing at an open valentine that lay before him; a silver love-affair, with the sweet words, "Je vous aime. M'aimez-vous?" deliberately transcribed in a chirography that made his heart beat quicker as he thought of the fair hand he knew had penned it.

He loved her so, sweet Sophy Blair, on whose table in the little front room he had seen this very sheet of paper before it had gone to Ormsby's. He remembered reading the words, and wishing it were for him.

And now, now, Sophy, in this charming way, that he might accept or reject, had sent him an encouragement to win her!

With a heart overflowing with bliss and new-born joys, he drew paper to him and wrote her a letter; just such a letter as his heroes had written to their sweethearts; such a letter as only a poet soul could write or appreciate; a letter that Geneva St. Cyril would have given her very life for.

This he sent; and directed the boy not to wait for an answer. Then he lighted his student-lamp, and went back into the writer's dream-world, where all things are so beautiful. Twenty minutes later the boy returned, with a hastily scribbled note.

"MR. CLYDE—I am too indignant to express correctly my thoughts. To think you should accuse me of sending you such a valentine is sufficient to render null whatever protestations you may have made."

SOPHY BLAIR.

That was the end of his exquisite dream: wounded, heart-sick, sore, disappointed, he folded away the letter with solemn, sacred tenderness; then leaned over his desk again, while Sophy watched the graceful shadow on the curtains with tear-pearled eyes, hating herself, for her cruel, impulsive note, and wondering why Fate denied her every thing.

At the elegant mansion on Murray Hill, Geneva St. Cyril was half-expecting, half-hoping an answer, one that never came to her; then, when, after a day and night of ceaseless thought upon it, she had taught herself the lesson that if he had loved her, Vernon Clyde would have replied ere this, she calmly, coldly made up her mind, if there came from him no sign by the evening, she would marry Gordon Van Blascum, whether or no. Other women married where there was not love, might not she?

And so, when burners were blazing in the parlor that night, Geneva, in her trailing ruby velvet robes, sat, waiting to promise to be Gordon Van Blascum's wife, with cold heart, tearless eyes, and white cheeks.

It was very strange, she thought, that he did not come; then she wondered what kept him, and retired to her room with a strange, vague presentiment of coming doom.

The next morning early there came a note; a strange affair, that was half-inexplicable, half-terrible.

"MY DARLING SOPHY: If you will permit such a wicked wretch as I to call you so once more, I have come back to my allegiance. Take me, will you, Sophy, and let me love you, as of yore? Forgive the past, and let the future atone. I wait for the answer that will bring me to your side, my own dearest. Perhaps I had better say, before I send you this, that if any rumor has reached you of my attentions to Miss St. Cyril, you may regard them as worthless. She can never be more than my friend."

GORDON VAN B.

With eyes like freezing stars, Miss St. Cyril folded up the letter, and smiled.

"A fortunate case of misdirecting a love-letter."

While in the little front room on the Sixth avenue, Sophy Blair sat, half laughing, half crying, wholly indignant, over two letters that lay before her.

One was as follows:

"MISS GENEVRA: In all humility, I beg leave to withdraw from your consideration the proposals made yesterday. I thank you for permitting me to offer them, and I hope you will pardon my conduct. With deepest respect,

GORDON VAN BLASCUM.

"P. S. I have, on second thoughts, deemed it but just to you to explain that a previous engagement to a Miss Blair, that I had learned to regard as a thing only of the past, is my honorable excuse."

G. VAN B.

Sophy tossed it away with a curling lip;

then, with joyously-throbbing heart, read a communication from an attorney, stating that the absconding partner had been found, and, very luckily, a large portion of the funds had been invested safely, so that Mrs. Blair and daughter were raised to their old position. The name of the man was given as Brown, whose daughter, a charmingly beautiful girl, known as Miss St. Cyril, was enjoying the ill-gotten gains. The lawyer's note was dated from the same building in which Gordon Van Blascum had an office, where he probably heard the news, and wrote to Sophy, hoping to forestall the announcement of the attorney.

Including his letter in an envelope, Sophy returned it, without a word.

His surprise, rage and disgust were boundless. He had overstepped his mark, as he saw; and when in after days he learned that Geneva St. Cyril was an heiress in her own right, after all, and not the person referred to by the lawyer, being another of the same name, his wrath was terrible, but fruitless.

And Sophy?

Straight to her desk she went, and wrote a line:

"DEAREST VERNON:

"Will you forgive me, and love me still? Come to me, and let me tell you all."

And the answer came back:

"Mr. Clyde had gone away the night before to stay till the next autumn."

Down on the rocky beach at Newport,

with her sweet, wistful eyes searching the blue expanse of rippling waters, Sophy was sitting, thinking, as she always thought, of Vernon Clyde; where he was, and if she ever would see him again. They had been lonely days, and weeks, and months without him, and her young heart had sometimes grown sick with "hope deferred"; and now, on that bright, warm, breezy August day, she was sitting among the rocks, with the prayer in her heart that she might see him.

And then—a step; a silence; then her name was spoken, lowly, thrillingly, half fearfully; she sprang to her feet; one glance told her it was he. Then she sunk in a thankful joy to her knees, with Vernon Clyde's arm around her, his hand clasping hers.

And, with the solemn-sounding sea breaking on the rocks, it was righted between them forever.

genuine joy that the sailor responded to his old employer's request, to take his old ship—the Rover—to sea once more.

Mr. Fleming was seated in his large armchair, but arose as the stately old skipper unconcernedly entered the library.

"Glad to see you, captain, and as I suppose you wish to spend this, your last night, at home, I'll not keep you long."

"Bless your soul, sir!" returned the captain, bluntly. "I've told the old woman, and my house full of brats—dear brats, heaven bless 'em! I've said good-by to 'em all, and I sleep on the Rover to-night! I never break an old custom, and this is one," and the skipper seated himself, as if perfectly at home.

"Then, it's all very good, captain; we can talk at our leisure. But, first, take a little wine, and then, having made out the papers, we'll have a talk." As he spoke, the merchant drew a decanter toward him. He was about pouring the rich red liquor into a cut-glass wine-cup, when a noise was heard out by the rear window; then the cracking snap of a breaking twig.

Mr. Fleming sprang to the window, hurried open the shutters, and looked out. But the night was inky dark, and the old man could neither see nor hear any thing. He leaned out, and peered around in every direction. Then he took in his head, slowly lowered the sash, and returned to his seat.

"Do you fear listeners, sir?" asked the captain.

"Yes, no—that is, not exactly; but I have my reasons for being cautious. You, captain, and my daughter—the old man's voice trembled—"are all who possess my dreadful secret!"

"Tis as safe with me, Mr. Fleming, as if I did not know it. I am aware of your situation, sir, and I'm sorry for you!"

"Thank you! thank you!" murmured the poor merchant. "I know that you are sincere, captain—that you are an honest man. A staunch friend is rare nowadays, captain."

"As true as my name is Jack Kelson!"

There was a pause for some moments—the skipper occasionally sipping the generous wine, and Arthur Fleming, perturbed and uneasy, glancing over a pile of papers.

At length the old man looked up.

"There they are, captain, all arranged," he said. "And now, is the Rover—God bless the old craft—is she all ready for the

Her anchor was already hove up, and a hawser had just been passed aboard from the "Canonicus," the steamer which was to tow the large ship down to the sea.

At exactly a quarter-past eleven, the wheels of the tug revolved, the hawser tautened, and the good ship Rover followed her small conductor obediently, and glided smoothly away.

The tea-ship had fairly started on her long voyage, to end, whether prosperously or disastrously, no one could tell.

From the cupola of his towering mansion, Arthur Fleming and Madeleine watched through a glass, the large ship fading away. Fenton Thorne, the collegian, stood by them.

Silently, turn by turn, father and daughter continued to gaze after the Rover, until the dark smoke from the chimney of the tug, and the towering spars of the great ship, were hid behind the heavily-wooded headlands, far away, toward Newport.

And the prayers of father and daughter went up in a united petition to Him who rules the storm, for the safety, success and return of the gallant old tea-ship.

But Fenton Thorne knew not the earnestness of those prayers.

That afternoon, at four o'clock, when just below Newport, the Rover cast off the friendly hawser, then let drop her own snow-white pinions to the rising wind. In an hour afterward, with a green, foaming sea before her, and a spanking breeze abaft, the old ship sped by Point Judith, and dashed away over the rolling, white-capped billows.

One week after the departure of the tea-ship, Madeleine Fleming received a letter, written in a miserable, scrawling chirography—a letter, whose contents she read and re-read, as she covertly scrutinized the little ragged urchin who brought the missive.

The girl hesitated for a while; her father was not at home, and she was, from necessity, her own counselor. But, though merely a maiden, yet the girl had a warm, tender woman's heart, and an ear ever open to the cry of the unfortunate, or the pleadings of charity.

She did not ponder long, but taking a slip of paper, hastily scribbled a few lines in pencil, and handed it to the little boy, giving him at the same time a few pennies to make glad his poor, forlorn heart.



ALL FOR A VALENTINE.

The College Rivals: OR, THE BELLE OF PROVIDENCE.

BY DR. WM. MASON TURNER.
AUTHOR OF "\$50,000 REWARD, THE RUBY RING, MABEL VANE, MASKED MINER, ETC."

CHAPTER XVII.
CLOUDS OVER THE HEART.

THAT Arthur Fleming was getting the Rover ready for sea created no special surprise. The ship was his, and his affairs his own; no one had any thing to say about it. They were those of course who thought this action on the part of the old man somewhat singular and strange; that, in his old age, and surrounded by his great wealth, Arthur Fleming should suddenly grow greedy again.

It was not unusual to send out a tea-ship, though, at the time of which we write, the trade with China and the East from Providence was slack, in fact, almost abandoned. It must not be forgotten, too, that Arthur Fleming had made his fortune thirty years prior to the opening day of our story.

The Rover was lying in the lower bay, just above Vue de l'Eau. She had been hauled on the sands, and her old copper sheathing scrubbed and patched; her gaping seams laid with oakum-and-pitch; and then she had been floated off again by an incoming tide. Her high, old-fashioned but well-tried hull had received a new coat of paint; and her tall masts and tapering yards, bearing a new suit of sails, had been freshly scraped. Her provisions and water, with a small cargo of commodities, were already stowed; her officers and crew were aboard, and the stanch old craft was ready to try the dangers of the sea.

Old Captain Kelson, the weather-beaten skipper of the Rover, was readily admitted to the library of the Fleming mansion. Arthur Fleming was expecting him; he wanted to have a last talk over matters and to give his final instructions.

Captain Jack Kelson was a representative of the old-time sailor, bluff, hale, red-faced, courteous, confident, and thought quite well of himself, in a professional point of view. The old mariner was all aglow; for, fifteen years had elapsed since he had snuffed the salt-sea air from the deck of a ship. The old man thought he had retired for good, and that he would finish the remainder of his days, surrounded by home comforts and domestic joys.

Nevertheless it was with alacrity and

voyage, for any emergency? You know my all—my ALL—captain, is staked on her stanchness, and on your generosity and friendship," and he glanced half-pleadingly at the face of Captain Kelson.

"The Rover, sir, can stand any gale that ever howled over the ocean; and, as for me, why let it be sufficient that you have trusted me, and that my name is Jack Kelson?"

"True, captain, true. All will be well, all must be well, all SHALL be well, and my darling Madeleine shall not be poverty-stricken."

Heaven grant that may never happen. Mr. Fleming; and—and, why the truth is, if old Jack Kelson is alive, Miss Madeleine will never be brought to that strait; and the old tar vigorously brushed a tear-drop from his rough, weather-tanned cheek.

"Bless you, my old and tried friend! May Heaven be ever kind to you!" and the merchant caught the old skipper by the hand, and wrung it fervently.

The two old men spoke together until a late hour of the night. Then they separated—the skipper taking his way toward the southern section of the city, in the direction of the wharves; and Arthur Fleming, with aching head, and anxious, troubled heart, turning again to his papers on the table.

At last the old man arose.

"Yes," he muttered. "Tis my all; this mansion and the Rover, and yet, oh, God! they are not mine! No birth-night festivities now for poor Madeleine! No, no, we must leave this proud mansion! I foresaw the storm, and strove to avert it; I failed; and now, I am working for Madeleine! On the Rover I have risked my all; the old ship is freighted with all my hopes! Should she fail to return! Should some terrible gale—No, no! I'll not think it, I can't think it! Jack Kelson says she is stanch, and—Fenton Thorne! ay! he will marry Madeleine, and the lad will have great piles of money! My child shall not come to want!"

With these incoherent mutterings, old Arthur Fleming sunk back in his chair.

For some moments he was motionless, moving neither hand nor foot. Then, gradually, the arms crossed over his chest; then they fell softly, slowly, by his side. The aged, aching head dropped forward, and the old father, forgetting his sorrows and troubles, which were weighing him down, sunk into a deep and dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XVIII.
MADELEINE'S CHARITY-ERRAND.

AT eleven o'clock next day, was bustle—not confusion—on the decks of the Rover.

When the child had gone, Madeleine returned to the library.

She had not paused to watch the little boy, and she did not see the tall man at the neighboring corner, quietly call the messenger aside, and slipping a bright half-dollar in his hand, take the note—quickly read it, and return it to the boy, at the same time sending him on his way.

But Madeleine spread out that rude scrawl lying on the table, and perused it again. The maiden's face was troubled, as she folded the letter and placed it within her portfolio.

That communication was brief and touching. It ran thus:

"MISS FLEMING: A poor woman solicits your charity. I am suffering—almost starving, and have four little children depending upon me for support. I appeal to you, Miss Fleming, for aid. I have often seen and loved your sweet face; I know I could appeal to none more willing to help me. I do not ask you for alms, until you have seen me and my wretchedness, and have heard my hungry children crying for bread. Come and see me; you have nothing to fear, for innocence, coupled with such goodness, is its own safeguard. I have washing to do almost every day, but am at home in the evening. I beg you come and see me. I live on the Seekonk, in the first little house, a quarter of a mile below the Butler Asylum. Please come!

"Trusting yours,
"MRS. MARY CHAPMAN."

Madeleine Fleming's reply to this appeal was what might have been expected of her. It consisted of only a few lines, and read thus:

"DEAR MADAM: Of course I'll come. I will bring with me something for your poor little children. Expect me early in the evening—this evening. I would be no Christian if I refused you.

"Truly yours,
"MADELEINE FLEMING."

The sun had just gone down that evening, when Madeleine Fleming walked hurriedly by the college and turned into Hope street. She continued out this thoroughfare a considerable distance beyond the university. Then she struck directly across the common, at that time there, and pushed on her way toward the dark belt of woods, in which, half-hid, lay the Butler Asylum.

The young girl slackened not her step, despite the ominous twilight, which was settling down, but kept on along the lane, leading into the main highway.

Madeleine, however, was beginning to feel nervous, for the twilight was growing deeper; somber shadows were lying under the trees and in the fence corners, and the place was lonely and out-of-the-way.

No wonder that the young girl's heart

beat quicker, as a footstep, rapidly following, fell suddenly on her ear.

Madeleine turned, and saw the tall figure of a man striding along after her. She hurried her pace.

The man promptly quickened his. Then the girl, in very terror, sprang forward into a run.

"Fear not, Miss Madeleine; it is I!" sung out a cheerful voice.

"Heaven be thanked! I am so glad it is you, Mr. Smith!" she continued, as the Kentuckian came up.

"Were you alarmed, Miss Madeleine?" asked the stalwart collegian, in his deep but pleasant voice.

"To tell the truth—yes; but, I am not now, Mr. Smith. I am so glad you have come!" The girl spoke frankly, artlessly.

For a moment a shade of poignant pain clouded Stephen Smith's face, but it was gone in a moment, and one of anxiety and suspicion took its place, as he glanced quickly around him.

"And where are you going, Miss Madeleine?" he asked, softly, after a pause. "Laden with a basket, too! Give it me," and he took the heavy basket.

"I am on a mission of mercy, Mr. Smith. A poor woman is living right here in the city, and she is starving!"

"And you are going to her house?"

"Yes; it is not far off now."

"With your permission, Miss Madeleine, I'll accompany you," said the student. "I am somewhat charitable myself, if people will let me be! These last words were spoken a little grimly."

"Thank you, Mr. Smith; I am so glad you are with me."

Madeleine Fleming was a noble, trusting girl, and her faith in Stephen Smith was implicit.

The two had now left the highway and entered, as by directions in Mrs. Chapman's letter, a small by-path leading below the asylum.

Suddenly, but far in front of them, two forms flitted across the road. One was a female, as could be seen despite the gloom; the other was a man.

Further on, up this dark lane, a carriage stood, dimly visible in the evening glamour.

As the two persons cleared the road, Stephen Smith coughed aloud.

Almost instantly a small jet of flame leaped out ahead from the bushes, a bullet dashed the sand of the path, in the Kentuckian's face, and a sharp report rung out on the air.

But Stephen Smith did not start. He simply exclaimed:

"Look out there, or you'll shoot somebody!"

As he spoke, the two figures emerged from the brush, and struck rapidly across the common.

Stephen Smith smiled to himself, but said nothing.

"That was a narrow escape, Mr. Smith," said Madeleine, trembling in every limb. "People should be more careful with firearms."

"The truth is, Miss Madeleine," replied the student, gravely, "some people don't care; they should be taught better. But, come; where is the house of this poor woman? I do not see it."

"Nor I; and, Mr. Smith, I think I'll try again to-morrow. 'Tis dark now."

"You are wise, Miss Madeleine; we'll return. But you are tired; we'll see if that carriage yonder is engaged."

By this time Madeleine had trustfully slipped her arm into Stephen Smith's. The two walked toward the carriage.

"Are you engaged?" asked the Kentuckian of the driver, who was half-dozing on his seat.

"Yes; for lady and gentleman," was the short reply.

"All right; we are here," said the student, promptly.

The driver stared at the answer, and at the big basket, but simply adjusted his reins and asked:

"Where to?"

"Mr. Arthur Fleming's, North Main street," replied Stephen Smith, as he handed in his charge, and followed with the basket, himself.

"Very good, sir; I know the house." The driver cracked his whip, and they rolled away.

Madeleine wondered; her head seemed light—she almost fancied herself in a dream. But she said nothing.

Stephen Smith was unusually quiet; he was thinking.

Fifteen minutes passed, and the carriage which had been driven at a rapid rate, drew up before the entrance of the Fleming mansion.

Silently the student assisted the maiden to alight. Then he handed the driver some coins; the man, touching his hat at the unexpected bounty, for he had already been paid, drove away.

"Come in, Mr. Smith—do," plead Madeleine.

But the collegian excused himself, and after placing the basket within the gate, bowed, and strode away toward College street.

"You are euchered, Ralph Ross! I held too strong a hand; though, if the truth must be told, you're *knave* enough for a dozen packs! Strange, ay, very strange! You had better not been born, black-hearted villain, than to have raised your hand against my life!"

The student strode on.

CHAPTER XIX.
"WHAT THE STARS SAY."

"WELL, well, my good woman, that matters not! Tell me your price, and if reasonable, I will pay it."

"Nay, nay, miss; you're in a hurry, and—unreasonable. You ask a great deal at my hands. It will not do for me to engage in deception, else it may be denied to me to read what the stars say."

"Nonsense!" and the closely-veiled lady stamped her foot impatiently. "What care I *what* the stars say, and whether or not you can read them? I want your assistance; I will pay for it."

"But I tell you again," interrupted the other, decidedly, "that, unless your purposes are honest, you will fail!"

"Are they not honest?" exclaimed the veiled woman, angrily.

"Tis no business of mine, and I know not," replied the old woman, calmly; "but I do know what is right."

"Tush! tush!" said the other; "you talk idly and not to the purpose. I'll not listen to your nonsense. Nay, do not interrupt me, for time is precious. I am here on business. Tell me what you demand for aiding me, and how much, in addition, for keeping a secret. Speak out; remember, business is

business, and that the money will be easily earned."

The old woman leaned back, and casting her eyes aloft, seemed lost in some abstruse calculation.

"Her face was a strange one—that old woman's—and contending passions were battling there."

But her visitor was getting impatient.

"Speak, madam!" she said, imperiously; "this can not require much thought."

The old woman slowly lowered her head.

"You are business-like, indeed!" she muttered, with a low, cackling laugh; "and I'll be as much so! Pay me twenty dollars in advance; you have my terms."

"Too much! Take ten—no overpays you; take it, or I go," and she turned toward the door.

"No, no; don't go. Wait a moment, and let me think. You're in too great a hurry."

"I'll not wait a minute," and the visitor laid her hand upon the knob.

"I'll accept your offer," gasped the old woman, quickly.

"Good!" said the other, as if expecting such a result; "I will come to-morrow, and make my arrangements."

Without another word, she whisked out of the room into the street, omitting even to say good-morning.

This singular conversation took place in a small house standing in the rear of a tenement on North Main street, near the gates of the cemetery. The door of that small, retired rear-house bore a large, old-fashioned brass plate. There was a name on that plate—a quaint, odd name.

Several weeks had now elapsed since the occurrence of the events as given in our last chapter; and the honored event in the aristocratic Fleming mansion—the birth-night of Madeleine—had passed uncelebrated.

Had it been forgotten?

The large house, on that usually auspicious evening, was closed; only one or two lights shone out from the huge pile, and they came from the dormitory of the servants.

The truth is, a week before the long-looked-for night, Arthur Fleming had told his daughter, with a sickly smile, a faint attempt at light-heartedness—for tears stood in his eyes—that he was—not exactly *dread* of celebrating those birth-nights; but he was afraid that *his* guests might find of them!

Madeline had bowed her head, and said nothing.

Her father had gone on to say that, therefore, instead of celebrating the occasion as of old, he and Madeleine would take a trip by rail, and have a winter view of Niagara Falls!

Madeline had not raised the slightest objection to this plan; for she knew, though he failed to tell her in so many words, her father's reasons for this dark, midwinter journey.

The house, then, had been, echoless and cheerless on this December evening. No flashing diamonds and gorgeous dresses, on this night, had passed beneath the radiance of the great chandeliers.

One week after the evening had passed, Arthur Fleming and his daughter returned—the old man seemingly happy, and Madeleine, too. The maiden, whatever were the clouds above her—sombre or purple—was almost always happy. Fenton Thorne was her idol and treasure; and she owned him still, in the face of all adversity.

Since the eventful evening when Stephen Smith had accompanied Madeleine in search of the widow Chapman's out-of-the-way and never-found cottage, the Kentuckian had called once. He only made a passing allusion to the circumstance; and he expressed no surprise whatever when the girl informed him that she had gone next day to look for the poor woman, but had failed again in finding her or her house.

Stephen dryly suggested that perhaps the poor woman was too obscure a personage to be known by *any* one! But the young man did not volunteer to hunt for the widow Chapman; and Madeleine thought it a little strange that he failed to do so.

Between Stephen Smith, however, and Ralph Ross, hot, angry words had passed; and had it not been for some students standing by, it is more than probable the young men had come to blows. One thing is certain—Ralph Ross avoided Stephen, and would never, if possible, meet him face to face.

As has been said, several weeks had passed. One morning Madeleine sat in her father's library, sad and listless; for Fenton Thorne, for some cause, had absented himself longer than was customary with him.

As the girl sat there, the bell suddenly rang, and a letter was handed in.

Curiously the maiden took the missive, and glanced at the superscription. As the strange handwriting—evidently masculine—fell upon her sight, Madeleine started. It was directed to herself.

She hastily tore open the envelope, and, with feelings we will not attempt to describe, read as follows:

"MISS FLEMING:

"Pardon the presumption of which I am guilty, in addressing you. Though a stranger, yet, believe me, I am actuated solely, in writing to you, by the desire to do you a service. I know you by reputation, and by sight; but have never spoken with you. But I do know him, personally, whom rumor says to be your accepted lover. I know Fenton Thorne!"

"Pardon a few plain words, and though I sign no name to this communication, I beg you to accept my statements. I will be brief."

"Fenton Thorne is not true to you; he loves another woman; he has plighted his solemn troth to that woman. That woman is this fellow's beautiful MYRA HOXLEY. The young man has heard it hinted that your father is not—excuse me, if I give you pain—is not as rich as report would have him. Of course there is no foundation for such a report; but you will see that it has had some weight with Mr. Fenton Thorne. He has transferred his affections to Myra Hoxley—a fine girl, Miss Fleming, we must all admit, and rich, beyond dispute. Fenton Thorne is rich, too; but he is selfish. From an old acquaintance, I speak as I do. He would not wed the prettiest and most amiable girl in Providence, and all agree that you are such, unless she brought him a large fortune. I do not ask you to believe me; but in order to satisfy your own mind, as to the falsity of this fellow's protestations to you, I ask you as you value your future happiness, to go and see a good old woman—a wise woman, living in the rear of No. — North Main street. You may not believe in clairvoyance, or astrology, nor will we argue as to the merits of either; but go and see this old woman, who pretends at all events to be a clairvoyant, and a perfect reader of the stars. If you disregard this advice, evil will come of it. Seek the old woman at once, and tell her your errand. She will then tell you what the stars say."

"A FRIEND."

The letter fell from Madeleine Fleming's hands, and a cold shiver passed over her frame. Her face at first flushed, and then grew as pale as death.

"Can it be true?" she moaned. "Oh, God! can I believe that Fenton Thorne is so false! No, no! But, Myra Hoxley! Alas! alas! Nonsense! away doubts! I'll not distrust him. Oh! Fenton is mine, mine alone! Yet, this letter! Oh! heaven! I'll go mad! I must see this woman—I'll seek her now!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 44.)

RED ARROW.

The Wolf Demon: THE QUEEN OF THE KANAWHA.

OR, BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "ACE OF SPADES," "SCARLET HAND,"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FIGHT INTO THE DEATH.

THE two scouts looked upon the blood-stained cap with horror.

"The blood is fresh, too!" cried Boone.

"Lark must have been killed by this monster immediately after we missed him in the thicket."

"It looks like it," said Kenton, solemnly.

"Let us look for the body."

But as they were about to commence their search, the sound of footfalls approaching through the wood fell upon their ears.

"Hush!" cried Boone, grasping Kenton by the arm as he spoke; "do you hear that?"

"It's some one coming through the wood."

"Yes, and hyer all comers are enemies and not friends; let's to cover," said Boone.

A second after, the two woodmen were snugly concealed in the bushes.

The steps came nearer and nearer, and then, through the gloom of the night, the watching eyes of the two saw the fearful form of the terrible Wolf Demon approaching.

He walked not now with stealthy tread but his step was heavy and slow. His head was bent down, low, upon his breast.

Slowly he came on, passed by the ambush of the scouts, then crossed the moonlit glade and entered the thicket on the opposite side. He was bending his steps in the direction of the Indian village of Chillicothe.

Hardly had the awful form disappeared within the gloom of the forest, when Boone grasped Kenton, nervously, by the shoulder.

"Kenton," he said, in a hoarse whisper, "let us not search for the body of our friend, whom this awful thing has killed, but revenge his death."

"I'm with you, tooth and nail," replied Kenton, firmly.

"Let's follow this thing, then."

"Go it," said Kenton, tersely.

Then the woodmen, with caution, followed in the path of the Wolf Demon.

The Demon proceeded direct to the Indian village.

The woodmen were guided in their course by the noise of his footsteps.

Suddenly the sound of the steps ceased.

Boone and Kenton crept forward with increased caution.

A few rods on, and they found themselves on the edge of the timber and in full view of the Indian village.

The Wolf Demon was not to be seen!

The scouts then guessed the reason why the sounds of the Wolf Demon's tread had ceased so suddenly. The Demon had entered the village in search of prey.

The path that the two had followed entered the village close by the river's bank.

It was plain to Boone that the Wolf Demon had selected the same road into the Indian village that he, Boone, had taken in escaping from it.

"We're treed," said Boone, as they reached the edge of the timber and perceived that they could proceed no further in their pursuit without danger of being discovered by the red-skins.

"A full stop hyer," said Boone, thoughtfully.

"Yes, it 'pears like it," Kenton replied.

"S'pose we wait hyer for the varmint? Ef he went into the village this way, it's likely that he'll come out the same path."

"That's true."

"Yes, as preachin'. I don't know as we kin damage the critter," said Boone, thoughtfully. "We hain't got no silver bullets, and I've heard say that it takes a silver bullet to stop a spook."

"We kin try," said Kenton, decidedly.

"Right again, by hooky! Give us your paw, Sim; we'll stick by each other in this."

"Yes, to death," answered Kenton.

A firm grip of hands sealed the compact. Then the two again concealed themselves in the bushes.

They watched and they waited.

In the Indian village, Ke-ne-ha-ha, the great Shawnee chieftain, sat in the gloom of his wigwam.

The little fire that burned in the center of the lodge cast a baleful light over the dusky face of the warrior.

Dark and full of sorrow were the thoughts of the chieftain.

He saw again the death-scene of the Red Arrow; heard her shriek for mercy, and then beheld the warm life-blood gushing, free, from her young veins. Amid the smoke and flames, she died. Like the Roman father, he had given to the death his own flesh and blood. And that deed had brought upon his nation the terrible scourge of the Wolf Demon.

Well might the brow of Ke-ne-ha-ha look dark as the thunder-cloud when he thought of the past. And in the future he saw no ray of light. He had little hope that the White Dog would succeed in his mission and kill the terrible foe.

As he was brooding over these gloomy thoughts, his daughter, Le-a-pah, entered the wigwam.

"Saw the White Dog speak with the chief?" the girl asked.

"Let the brave enter," Ke-ne-ha-ha replied. A gleam of light flashed over his clouded face. Why should the young warrior seek him, save to tell of the death of the Wolf Demon?

A second more and the warrior stood before him. The girl remained, discreetly, at the door of the lodge.

"Well?" questioned the chief.

"The White Dog sought the Wolf Demon in the forest, fought him hand to hand, but the Shawnee brave fell beneath his foot; the tomahawk was raised to strike, when Le-a-pah bounded from the wood and the Wolf Demon held his arm and fled from her like the night flies from the dawn."

Ke-ne-ha-ha listened, in amazement.

"The warrior has failed," he said, slowly.

"Manitou did not will that he should kill the Wolf Demon," replied the young brave.

"The brave has tried, and the Shawnee chief will keep his word. Le-a-pah!"

The maiden came at his call.

The chief gave her to the embrace of the young warrior.

"You are both my children—go." But no gleam of joy lighted up Ke-ne-ha-ha's stern face as he gave his daughter into the arms of her lover. The living Wolf Demon cast a mantle of gloom over his brain.

The brave and the girl withdrew from the lodge. The manner of the chieftain forbade further words.

Left alone, Ke-ne-ha-ha strode up and down the narrow confines of the wigwam in sullen thought.

"Oh, that my life might save my people from this terrible scourge!" he murmured, with clenched teeth. "For the two lives, he has taken twelve. How many more of my nation must fall by the tomahawk of the Wolf Demon ere his taste for Shawnee blood will be satisfied?"

"One!" responded a deep voice.

Ke-ne-ha-ha turned, his blood chilled to ice with horror.

His eyes looked upon the terrible form of the Wolf Demon standing in the doorway of the wigwam. In the hand of the Demon shone the deadly tomahawk.

Ke-ne-ha-ha gazed with starting eyes upon the terrible figure.

"Let the chief prepare to die. He is the last Shawnee that will feel the edge of the tomahawk of the avenger," cried the deep voice.

With an effort, Ke-ne-ha-ha roused himself from the spell of terror that the appearance of the dreaded Wolf Demon had cast around him.

With a sudden bound, he seized his tomahawk, that had been, carelessly, cast upon the floor of the wigwam.

The Wolf Demon made no effort to prevent the chief from possessing himself of the weapon.

Tomahawk in hand, the foes faced each other.

Slowly they moved around the narrow circle of the wigwam, watching each other with wary eyes, each seeking an unguarded opening for an attack.

Three times they made the circle of the lodge, the little fire, with its glimmering light, revealing their movements to each other.

Then with a spring, like unto the panther's in quickness and in force, the Wolf Demon leaped upon the Shawnee chief.

Ke-ne-ha-ha did not seek to parry the attack, but nimbly he evaded it by springing to one side.

The tomahawk of the Wolf Demon spent its force upon the air; and as he passed, the why he dealt him a terrible stroke upon the head that cut in deep through the wolf-skin, and felled him heavily to the earth.

A hoarse note of triumph came from the lips of the chief as he beheld the downfall of his foe. But his joy was of short duration, for like the ancient god of the fable that gathered strength from being cast to earth, the Wolf Demon rose to his feet.

The shock of the fall had torn the tomahawk from his hand, but he did not seek to regain the weapon.

With naked hands—weaponless—he faced the Shawnee chief. The blood streaming down freely over his face—over the black and white pigments with which it was painted in horrid fashion—made him look like an evil spirit fresh from the fires below.

His eyes shot lurid flames as he glared upon the Shawnee warrior.

Ke-ne-ha-ha grasped his tomahawk with desperate energy and waited for the attack of the unarmed foe.

The Shawnee chieftain did not have long to wait.

With the spring of a tiger the Wolf Demon leaped upon the Indian.

Desperately Ke-ne-ha-ha struck at him with the tomahawk, but the Wolf Demon warded off the blows with his arm, and despite the efforts of the chief to prevent it, he closed in with him.

Sinewy and supple was the Shawnee warrior, yet he was but as a child in the powerful grasp of his terrible foe.

The Wolf Demon held him in a grip of iron. His arms, linked round the Indian like bands of steel, were crushing the life out of him little by little.

Vainly Ke-ne-ha-ha struggled to free himself from the anaconda coil.

Like the serpent of far-off India, wreathing its huge length around its prey, the Wolf Demon held the Shawnee chieftain in his grip.

The breath of the Indian came thick and hard.

Up and down in the narrow confines of the wigwam swayed the contending foes, like two venomous snakes coiled together.

Exerting all his strength, the Indian tried to break the grasp of the Wolf Demon. Vainly he struggled—vainly he tried. He felt that his strength was going fast.

Tight and tighter grew the grip of steel.

The Indian turned black in the face. The blood gushed from his mouth. He ceased to struggle. The grip relaxed and Ke-ne-ha-ha fell to the ground, dead.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LAST OF THE DEMON.

A LOOK of triumph swept over the blood-stained face of the Wolf Demon as he looked upon the lifeless form of the Shawnee warrior.

From the out in the head of the Wolf the blood was slowly trickling, but he did not seem to mind his hurt.

With a hoarse cry of joy he knelt by the side of the man whom he had strangled to death with his powerful arms.

He tore the hunting-shirt from the breast of the dead chieftain; then he drew the dead man's knife from his girdle.

Three rapid slashes and the Red Arrow, graven in the flesh, was blazoned on the breast of the Shawnee warrior.

"Inhuman dog, more like the wolf in heart than I, thus do I mark you," the Wolf Demon cried, in a voice hoarse with passion. "Eleven red demons slew the Red Arrow; eleven Shawnee warriors have I slain. Not one of the murdering band has escaped my steel. She fell in the blazing cabin amid the great green wood, near where the Muskingum waters laugh and play. The assassins have fallen in the glade and in the woodland, by the banks of the Scioto and the Ohio, in the paths of the Shawnee village and by the lodge-fires of the Chillicothe. I have struck them down by night and by day. And on each breast, in memory of the Indian maid that I once loved so well, have I stamped the Red Arrow. Now, at last, the chief of the red

band of slayers has felt the edge of the scalping-knife. My work is done—my mission ended, and now, death, take me for thine own!"

The Wolf Demon rose to his feet and glared wildly around him. His eyes were starting from their sockets and gleamed like balls of fire.

"What is this I see?" he cried, suddenly; "a river of blood! It is the blood of the red warriors that have fallen by my hand, and she the loved and lost is in its center. She beckons me to her. I see her as plain as I did an hour ago when she sprang from the earth in the woodland glade by the hollow oak, to save the young Indian warrior from my vengeance. I know that he was not one of the assassin band that took thy life, but in his veins ran the blood of the accursed Shawnees, and I had doomed him to the death. But I spared him. Did you not come from thy spirit home among the blest and lift up thy hand to stay my arm? Go on, I'll follow thee! Death is near. It is welcome, for it brings me to thee, my love. I hear the song of angels in mine ears! I am coming!"

Slowly, with his fixed eyes vacantly on the air, the Wolf Demon came from the lodge, descended the bank, and hid by it from sight, left the Shawnee village.

Boone and Kenton from their ambush perceived him approach.

Boone touched Kenton on the arm as if to call his attention, but Kenton had already perceived the terrible figure.

"Shall we fire at him?" questioned Kenton, in a whisper, and the usually firm hand of the borderer trembled as he fumbled with the lock of his gun.

"No, no!" cried Boone, quickly, and in a cautious whisper; "the report would bring the hull of the Shawnee village down upon us, list like stirring up a nest of hornets."

"What shall we do, then?"

"We'll follow and attack him in the forest," answered Boone.

The Wolf Demon came, slowly, on, his eyes staring full upon the air before him. He passed by the ambush of the two woodmen and entered the thicket.

As he passed, the two noted the signs of a conflict so apparent upon him.

"Jist look at his face! It's livid all over with blood!" exclaimed Boone, in wonder.

"He's fixed another Shawnee, I reckon," said Kenton, seriously.

"Sim, it's a terrible thing to attack this awful critter," said Boone, with a grave look upon his honest face.

"But the death of poor Lark—"

"Must be avenged!" exclaimed the old hunter, compressing his lips together, firmly.

"That's so," said Kenton, with a pale face and a throbbing heart, yet with undaunted courage.

"I didn't see as he had any weapons, but if he's the devil, he don't need any. Come on, we'll give him a tussle, anyway. Lord, I wish I could remember a prayer or two," said Boone, seriously.

Then with cautious steps they followed on the trail of the Wolf Demon.

The singular being pursued the same path returning that he had taken in coming through the wood.

He moved so slow that the two in pursuit followed him without difficulty.

Every now and then he halted for a moment and then again went on.

His steps became irregular. The hunters following close behind noticed that he was reeling like a drunken man.

From side to side he swayed as he made his way through the forest.

He reached the little glade by the side of which stood the hollow oak.

"Let's attack him in the glade!" cried Boone, as he and Kenton reached the edge of the opening and beheld the Wolf Demon standing motionless, as if irresolute, in the center of it.

"Come on, then."

Clubbing their rifles—they did not dare to fire for fear of the report arousing the Indian village—the two scouts dashed into the opening.

Hearing the noise of their footsteps, the Wolf Demon turned, extended his arm as if to stay their progress, and then with a heavy groan fell sideways to the ground.

The sudden shock burst the wolf-head from its fastenings to the body, and it rolled away from the prostrate figure.

The scouts halted in astonishment.

The wolf-head, gone, the head of a man, covered with light, clustering curls, was revealed to their gaze.

Quickly, they knelt by the side of the Wolf Demon and wiped the blood and war-paint from his face.

The superstitious fear of the woodmen was all gone now, for they knew that it was a human form that lay extended on the earth before them.

The terrible Wolf Demon was dying.

The tomahawk of the Shawnee had given him his death-wound. The strong limbs, once so powerful, were now made feeble by the near approach of that terrible mystery, that human mind never yet has solved.

The two scouts lifted up the head of the dying man. His eyes opened slowly, and, with a vacant look, he gazed around him.

"Oh, what a terrible dream!" he murmured, faintly.

The woodmen bent their heads, eagerly, to listen.

"It seems as if I have waded through a river of blood—fresh, warm blood, gushing, freely, from terrible wounds. I dreamed that I had been changed into a wolf, a beast with a human soul, and in that soul, one thought only, vengeance on the Shawnee nation. In the light and in the darkness I sought that vengeance. The red braves fell around my path as the wheat falls around the reaper, yet I staid not my hand, for the cry went up for blood, rivers of it. On each victim I cut my mark, a Red Arrow, in remembrance of the wife that the red demons tore from me a year ago by the Muskingum. I was gifted with the cunning of the maniac, for at times I am mad. The wound on my head, that I received from a falling raft on that fearful night when my wife was killed, affected my brain. In my madness, I must have dreamed all these terrible things. Dreamed that I fashioned myself a wolf-skin like a wolf, and then struck down my foes. A hollow oak in the forest was my home; there I concealed my wolf-skin when my mad-fit was over. Oh! it was a terrible dream."

Boone and Kenton exchanged glances; they knew that the dream was a reality.

Then the eyes of the stricken man, glaring around him, fell upon the strange device that covered his

those upon whom the duty fell were busily engaged in getting ready the evening meal, when, without having created the slightest sound that would give warning of their approach, two men, mounted upon the scraggy-looking mustangs of the country, rode out of the brush, and drew up on the confines of the camp.

It required but a single glance to see that they were ruffians of the lowest and worst class.

The long, tangled masses of unkempt hair and grizzled beard, together with the soiled and greasy appearance of their buckskin garments, gave them a look at once repulsive and dangerous.

They were both heavily armed—rifle, pistol, hunting-knife and hatchet were all disposed in their proper places.

With a loud, coarse greeting they dismounted and demanded the hospitality of the camp for the night.

This, upon the plains, is never refused, though in the present instance, it was accorded reluctantly, and in a few minutes the newcomers were as much at home as if they belonged to the party.

Leaving the strangers busily attacking the food that had been placed before them, we will go back to the time when the camp was first pitched.

Hardly had the wagons been drawn up in the usual half-circle, when a young man, tall, stalwart and handsome, the one whom we saw take the fatal bullet from the body of the murdered guide, made his way with a quick step and eager face, to where a light "carry-all" was standing a little removed from the other vehicles.

A clear, sweet voice greeted the young pioneer as he drew near, and the next instant a bright face shone from between the curtains, and a shapely hand was held forth in warm welcome.

"How has my darling stood the day's journey?" he asked, as he took the proffered hand in his broad palm.

"Why, it has been just delightful," was the answer, "and I am not tired a bit. You have come for our walk, have you not?"

"Yes, if you are really not wearied." Then turning to an elderly gentleman who was superintending the construction of a shelter by using blankets, wagon-covers, etc., he asked:

"Mr. Duncan, I have come to ask you permission to take Mabel for a short walk on the river. It will, perhaps, do her good after her confinement in the carriage all day."

"Certainly, my boy. Do so, but do not go too far," was the willing response of the father, who with a look of extreme satisfaction watched the young people as they strolled off into the forest.

It was plain to see that the pair were lovers.

Mark Hanley had won the heart of Mabel Duncan, in their old home on the banks of the Roanoke, and when Mr. Duncan turned his face toward the "land of the setting sun," Mark had left all and followed her he loved.

And so as they walked along the bank of this unknown stream in an almost unknown land, they talked of the old times in the home they had left, and mingled their hopes and expectations of those that were to come in the new home that they were to build for themselves.

Their tread upon the mossy bank was noiseless, and the tones of their voices were low and tender—so silent their steps, and so low their words that the birds upon the branches above their heads scarce noted their approach.

In this manner they drew near a dense thicket that spread across their path, and were on the point of returning, when, with startling effect, the deep, harsh tones of a man's voice, evidently speaking under strong excitement, fell upon their ears. With a quick motion Mabel turned to fly, but Mark seized her arm, and with a whispered word of caution drew her to his side.

He did not speak, but with a significant smile touched the hilt of a heavy six-shooter that hung at his belt.

"Curse you for a coward!" said the voice. "We've rubbed out their guides, and now they're coming to get you. You want to run, do you? You lie when you say I'm a coward, and you know it!" exclaimed a second voice, fiercely. "But 'sposen the others don't git here in time, we'll be in a pretty fix in their camp by ourselves."

"What's the hinder us goin' in an axin' for accommodations for the night? They'll give it, they're bound to, and we kin 'tarn their plans an' act accordin'." Don't be a fool, Bill Long, an' spile a good thing."

"Since you said I wur a coward, d— you, I'll go whar you'll lead if it wur to a hotter place nor this. So pitch ahead, an' if trouble comes don't say as how I didn't want ter wait till the others kin up."

"Oh, Mark! what is it?" asked the frightened girl, in a trembling whisper.

"These are the men or a portion of them, who murdered our guides, and are now planning the destruction of us all," was the stern reply, and the young man's face was a look of intense indignation. "Be quiet," he continued, "we must not alarm them. Only let them once get into camp, and then—"

He did not finish the remark, but drew Mabel away noiselessly, and stole back into the forest.

When the lovers returned to camp the two ruffians were still devouring the food that had been placed before them.

They ate more like half-famished brutes than human beings, and presented, altogether, so disgusting an appearance, that Mabel shrank back shuddering in every limb.

For one instant Mark Hanley gazed sternly at the pair, and then dropping Mabel's arm, he strode directly across to where they were seated.

As he did so, Mabel sprang forward to where her father was still engaged upon the shelter, and hastily calling him a little apart, began speaking in a low, hurried manner.

Before her tale was half told the pioneer comprehended all, and rushed to the carriage for his rifle, which was secured to the up-rights that supported the top.

While this bit of by-play was in progress, Mark had halted directly in front of the pair, and paused to take a good look at them as they were seated, side by side, upon a fallen log.

"Hullo, youngster! yer don't seem to take much odds 'bout starin' a man outen countenance," growled the man whom he had first heard speaking in the forest.

"I was admiring that rife of yours," coolly replied the young man, pointing to a short but unusually heavy gun that lay against the log by the side of the owner.

"Yer war, hey? Well, an' what d'ye

think uv her?" asked the ruffian, laying his hand upon the piece.

"Too heavy, I should think," replied the young man, reaching out his hand to take the gun.

The other darted a quick, keen look at Mark, slightly drew back the rifle, and then, seemingly thinking it better not to manifest any suspicion, handed it over, and seated himself upon the log.

Mark grasped the weighty weapon, and stepped back a pace or two, put his hand into his bullet-pouch and drew forth a large bullet, that had the appearance of having been once used.

Without a word, he placed the ball upon the bore. It fitted exactly, but would not drop down, owing to a slight protuberance caused by contact with the murdered man's bones.

"I have a ball here that fits your rifle," said Mark, sternly. "Shall I tell you where I got it?" and he stepped back another pace or two, and threw the rifle up, fairly covering the villain's head.

They both saw that they were discovered, but they did not know how fully their devilish plans were known. With a yell that would have shamed a Comanche, they started to their feet and drew their revolvers.

The leading villain, the one who owned the rifle, sprang forward toward Mark, who, at the moment, drew trigger.

Instead of the report that should have followed, only a sharp click, as the hammer fell, was the result.

The gun was not loaded, or probably not capped.

At that moment the other scoundrel fell before the unerring aim of Mr. Duncan, who had succeeded in getting his rifle free from its support in time to use it at the critical moment.

With an exclamation that savored strongly of an oath, Mark threw the rifle from him and drew his revolver, not, however, until his antagonist had fired once and missed.

Half a dozen rifles were already leveled at the villain, but the voice of the young man, who was now thoroughly aroused, stayed their hands.

"Let no man fire! Leave him to me!" he exclaimed, and, quick as thought, he delivered his shot, which failed of its true mission, but sent the pistol flying from the robber's hand.

Nothing daunted, the latter drew his heavy knife, and rushed upon Mark.

The young man waited his approach coolly, and at five paces again fired, this time with fatal effect.

Fall between the eyes the conical ball struck the murderer, while almost simultaneously the crack of another rifle was heard from the left.

Without a groan the fellow fell, dead almost before he had reached the earth.

When they turned him over, another wound, cutting the heart, was found.

This one came from the light rifle of Mabel Duncan, who, from the beginning, had watched and waited for the proper moment.

That night a strict watch was set, and at daylight a volley, as fatal as it was unexpected, was poured into the ranks of the advancing freebooters, who broke and fled in wild disorder.

We need not say that the brave girl was overwhelmed with praise by all, but the few tender words of gratitude and love that came from Mark were dearer to her than all the rest.

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Without a groan the fellow fell, dead almost before he had reached the earth.

When they turned him over, another wound, cutting the heart, was found.

This one came from the light rifle of Mabel Duncan, who, from the beginning, had watched and waited for the proper moment.

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man, more cruel, more brutal, more debased even than the negro captors, who themselves do not treat their slaves very affectionately or tenderly, except when they actually fatten them for the purpose of immediate consumption.

Having sold their slaves, the Fans retired into the interior, when the transfer to the ship commenced. It took place from the old barracoon to which I have already referred, and whence it was that Pablina was able to see the island on which I was wrecked, as well as that with the ever-smoking burning mountain, which she at once recognized on her landing.

It would be painful to record here the terrible story of the sufferings these wretched slaves endured during their short journey, sufferings not one-tenth part of what they might have suffered had they had to endure the horrors of the middle passage. But a fearful tempest arose, which drove them toward the land, and lasted several days; at the end of which the seamen took to their boats and left the ship, imagining it was sinking.

Then a large party of the negroes, aided by some black sailors belonging to the crew, who had been left behind, made a raft, which took nearly all the slaves upon it, being very large. It was made of ship spars and masts, with empty water-casks, of which there was an abundance on all sides.

Those who were unable to leave the ship were left to their fate, which, as the ship was unmanageable from the breaking of its rudder, was a cruel one. The last remnant were chiefly women, and being attached to one another, did their best to save one another's lives. Seeing, from the burning mountain, that land was not far off, they lashed each other to spars and committed themselves to the waves.

In this way was Pablina washed ashore. The others met with a very different fate.

As soon as Pablina and Polly could understand one another thoroughly, it came out, in the course of conversation, that there was a fertile wooded island to the northward, which at once roused hopes in the young girl's bosom which had never been quenched. She had seen, as they were swept away in the gust of mist and rain, that there was an island at no great distance from the ship.

Then Polly was well aware how many a man had lived for years upon a deserted island, by dint of courage and perseverance; such as Selkirk and others—to say nothing of Robinson Crusoe, who was nearly forty years alive on an island. My cousin had sufficient faith in me to believe that, with a wreck under my hand, I might, despite every difficulty, have survived all this time.

Then it was that Polly confided her hopes and fears to Pablina. She was sadly afraid that any attempt to enlist other sympathy, in what might appear so utterly hopeless a cause, might cause the total defeat of her purpose. Besides, there was a kind of grandeur in doing it all herself, or else a canoe or raft might have been constructed to transport others to the island.

But Pablina had great faith in her own powers. On the lakes and rivers of her native country—which she said had big seas, but no salt—she had crossed more than twenty miles, in even rough weather, and she was quite sure she could cross over, search the island, and return. But no sooner did she understand the fixed determination of Polly to accompany her, than she kept to herself the fact that the perianth would not contain more than one.

Her stratagem, it will be seen, was successful, and away she sped on her mission of gentleness and love. For some time her task was easy, and she succeeded by keeping well out to sea, and thus avoiding currents; in this way she reached the northern end of the volcanic island, after which she paddled in an oblique direction to that which appeared a dark cloud in the distance. But she was fully aware that this was her destined goal.

But presently the lowering sky, the distant thunder, and the flashing lightning, warned her of her great danger. But she faltered not. She was determined to succeed, or to perish in the attempt.

Then down came the storm, not at first very violently, but still enough to raise of the tiny craft, which was all that intervened between her and death. Still she urged her little craft forward, until the waves began to swell visibly, and she could now fancy herself down in the deep depths of the ocean, or then up on the very summit of the waves.

But her bold and gallant heart knew no fear. On! on! she sped, as the rain fell, and the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed, and the wind blew, until every thing seemed to prognosticate a fearful gale. At this moment, as if by magic, though the darkness was still over the face of the deep, and the elements were yet in mortal strife, the water became stiller, and the wind was unfelt. She had been swept by a current under the lee of my island, into smooth water.

Then away she paddled with might and main toward the shore, which she at length reached by means of a river, and utterly exhausted and fatigued after her perilous and adventurous journey, lay down to rest, after carefully concealing her canoe under some bushes.

She slept many hours, even unto dawn, and when she awoke the sky was so blue, the sea so smooth, the wind so light, that she determined to attempt a tour of the island, in the hope of finding some trace, either a hut, or smoke, or some other sign of my existence.

Unfortunately she took the wrong way, and paddled along the shore in the direction where, afterward, the Fan village was temporarily erected. On this occasion, her eyes being intently fixed on the shore, she moved along with extreme slowness; so that by evening she had only reached the mouth of another small stream, on the bank of which she at once noticed several of her friends and late companions on board the slaver, bathing.

Next minute almost, she was alternately clasped in the arms of her father and mother.

Before, however, she could enter into any explanation as to her presence on that island, and in possession of a canoe, a number of Fan Indians came rushing down, with loud shouts and laughter; for these were the very men who had sold her and her friends into slavery, and who now were once more in possession of the whole drove, for which they had been already so handsomely paid.

The arrival of Pablina was a great triumph, as it was so utterly and totally unexpected.

One of the young chiefs, who came down to welcome her in the ironical way which such brutal savages were likely to adopt, seemed, however, struck by her appearance. The life she had led with my friends had elevated her intellect. The mere study of a language will react upon the brain. Pablina looked glorious.

It has often been the fashion of writers to decry civilization, and praise up the virtues of a state of nature. Such persons know little of savages, who are in general cruel, brutal to women, tyrannical to children, and utterly selfish, indulging in every form of vice and debauchery which is known to man.

The one who looked so keenly at Pablina was a chief. The poor girl at first, knowing the awful habits of these atrocious negroes, fancied that her plump form, so different from the gaunt shape of her friends and relatives, had attracted his notice, and that she was to be immediately sacrificed and eaten. She was right in one way; her graceful appearance had taken his fancy, but he did not want to eat her. He wished to make her one of his wives; polygamy, of course, being common with savages so demoralized.

When Pablina understood the object with which the chief was gazing at her so earnestly, she was no less alarmed than if he had intimated his intention of eating her for supper. She had an instinctive horror of these fearful cannibals, and her intercourse with my cousin had not tended to increase her desire to mate with a Fan negro.

But she dissembled, and when the hunter brave paid her compliments, feigned to receive them with modest diffidence, and thus gained time.

The hunters had been on the island several days, and had had considerable luck, but they next day moved toward the interior of the island, when an idea struck the poor captive, of which she at once determined to avail herself.

She kept her eyes ever about, and during the course of the day, observed that there was continually to be seen, in certain places, the marks of footprints, which, like those of her friends on the volcanic island, were covered by something in the shape of a shoe, such as she wore herself, the gift of my cousin, who had saved several small articles in a bundle when the boat was loaded.

Once this discovery made, she knew that her journey had not been undertaken for nothing. The youth about whom Polly was so anxious was there.

The prisoners were not very securely guarded. The only canoes on the island were in the hands of the Fans, and under the charge of diligent sentinels, so that an escape into the woods would be, indeed, of little avail. But Pablina had another belief. She had, not unnaturally, a somewhat exaggerated idea of the whites. If she could but communicate with me, her father, mother, and other friends might be saved.

This thought it was that made her resolve on an escape.

Pablina was indeed fleet of foot, or she would not have gone a hundred yards. As she started, sauntering on her way, the eye of a savage Fan sentry was on her, but he suspected nothing until the girl, having discovered the general direction of my trail, took to her heels. It must have been a sight to see her bounding over the plain, with a dozen or more yelping savages in her train, foremost of whom was the youth whose eyes had been captivated by her bright and pleasing countenance.

These cries it was that alarmed me, and enabled me to give the savages such a welcome as taught them to respect the power of firearms for some time to come. My feelings have been already fully explained, but those of Pablina were difficult to define. How difficult it was to analyze her sensations may be judged from the fact that she did not reveal her knowledge of a smattering of my language.

I believe that my successful repulse of the Fans, my wholesale massacre of their warriors, had imbued her with an amount of respect for me amounting to idolatry, while still her mind was full of the pitiful state in which her parents and relatives were placed. What made her abstain from communicating her intentions to me, can scarcely be explained, except that she feared I would not allow her to attempt the rash task of rescuing her friends from such a horde of fearful savages.

Be this as it may, her escape is still in the memory of my readers, as well as the events which immediately followed her flight from the shelter of my cave. But what followed is yet not known.

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THE OLD LETTER.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Among a thousand letters old,
That dryly talk of stocks and shares,
Of gains or losses upon gold,
This little note has lain for years.
A paltry place for this dear thing
That once I trembled to receive!
And in it is a golden ring,
I gave to her one summer eve.

And on the fading page I read,
"Dear Tom, I send this back to you,
As when you gave it you agreed
That had I reason, I should do.
You're always jealous"—so I was.
"I dare not speak to any friend
But what you go to getting cross,
And so I think our love should end."

You're always looking at me so,
Why keep me always in your sight?"
Well, well, how could she help but know?
"And then you're coming every night,
And always hanging round me." True,
And I was happy there to be,
My love that made a saint of you,
Oh, Nannie, made a fool of me.

"You're always sighing, always sad,
And mad because I'm not. Oh, sir,
Why are you so?" Because I had
No heart for anything but her.
"They joke me of you night and day,
I hope you won't get mad at me,
But here's your ring. Don't stay away,
But think, remember, you are free."

And that is all—well, that's enough:
I fold the letter up again;
I now might call it foolish stuff,
But it was full of meaning, then.
And then I strove with all my mind,
And kept my heart against its will,
But reading this I almost find
That heart within me bleeding still.

The Pirate's Prize.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

"Now for the boat, my boys!" cried Gonzales Valverde, as he rushed toward the beach with a beautiful and unconscious woman in his arms.

One of his swarthy followers carried a bright-haired little boy in his strong arms. The little fellow bore a remarkable resemblance to the woman in Valverde's possession. Well might he, for she was his mother—she, whose youthful features bespoke her more than a woman.

At last Gonzales Valverde reached his boat, which lay within sight of the Spanish settlement, from which he had abducted his lovely burden. With the agility which characterizes the thorough nautical man, he sprang into the little craft, and the child boy was rudely tossed in after him.

He turned to his men, and glanced from them down the Florida coast.

A sight greeted him which sent the color from his cheeks, and parted his lips with a terrible oath.

A vessel was bearing down upon his own piratical smack, which stood out to sea.

"Off!" he shouted, pointing excitedly toward the unwelcome sight; "off, men, for Heaven's sake! The Planet—his accursed brigantine—is bearing down upon us. Off, off, I say!"

The pirates glanced at their enemy, and then pushed the boat forward, until a wave struck and threw her toward their ship.

Valverde saw that he would reach his own craft, the dread Sweeper of the Seas, before the Planet could intercept him; and once upon her crimson-stained decks, he considered himself secure. He could not overcome the Planet in a fair engagement; but he knew that he could easily outslail her.

When near the Sweeper, the child-wife opened her eyes.

She saw the approaching Planet, but she did not recognize it—she did not dream that the captain who paced its noble deck was her husband.

She raved upon her boy—her little Verdo—and then looked up into the pirate's un pitying eyes.

"I will not take you back to the settlement," he cried, interrupting her in the midst of tearful pleadings. "Look yonder. The captain of that brigantine is my bitterest enemy. I will not step into his power for a woman's sake! There was a time, Silva, when I would have done any thing for your sake; but you refused my love for his name. Now, am I not revenged? In my island home you shall become my—"

"Slave!" she interrupted him, in her bitterest voice.

"As you wish it," he said, smiling.

Finally the ship was reached, and the occupants of the boat found themselves on her deck. The first thing that met Valverde's eye was a number of his men laboring at the pumps.

"Mardo, what does this mean?" he demanded, striding up to his lieutenant.

"We are sinking, sir."

Without replying, Valverde darted below.

The Spanish wife and her boy were left in the care of an officer.

Presently the pirate chief reappeared on deck, and sprang toward his lieutenant with drawn pistol.

"Mardo," he cried, with flashing eyes, "holes have been bored in our bottom! The traitor still walks our decks, and you are he!"

A deathly pallor overspread the lieutenant's face, and he shrunk from the leveled pistol of his infuriated commander.

He did not deny the charge of treason, nor defend his traitorous act.

Valverde's pistol spoke, and Mardo went to the deck a bloody corpse.

"Thus, I punish traitors!" he cried, turning to his men with smoking pistol. "Sapera, convey that woman and her child to my cabin and lock them in."

Sapera turned to Silva, whose eyes were riveted upon the approaching ship.

Suddenly a shriek welled from her throat, and she staggered back to fall insensible in to the officer's arms.

"She has recognized the Planet," said Valverde. "Below with her, Sapera. We must fight—and die, for escape now is not to be thought of."

The officer bore the prisoners below, and returned to the deck.

Meanwhile the Planet had continued to approach the notorious Sweeper of the Seas.

The pirate-chief knew that his vessel was gradually settling, and that his doom was unavoidable.

He thought not of surrendering to superior numbers, only of fighting till not one of his crew survived.

Presently the Planet fired a shot which elicited a response from her antagonist. The shots, however, were harmless, for they fell wide of their intended mark.

On, came the Spanish brigantine, and lower and lower sunk the Sweeper of the

Seas. A desperately determined look wreathed the begrimed faces of the pirates, who, saber and pistols in hand, awaited the onset.

In the captain's cabin knelt the Spanish mother, with her boy clasped to her wildly beating heart. She heard the terrible booming of the death-freighted cannon, and the defiant words of encouragement which the pirates passed to one another. She knew that the vessel was sinking, and felt that soon her darling child would slumber on the sands of the gulf at her side.

Suddenly a broadside burst from the Planet. It mercilessly shattered her enemy's vessel, and stretched some of his best gunners dead upon the deck. The piratical craft shook like a leaf under the terrible discharge, and a minute later the vessels closed, and the Planet's crew swarmed over her sides.

Then followed the dreadful encounter. Inch by inch the pirates disputed the gory decks of their sinking vessel; but their fierce bravery availed them nothing. They were cut and shot down on every hand; no quarter being asked or given.

Foremost among his crew fought Lioni Zavera, husband and father to the trembling, praying ones in the cabin. He sought Gonzales Valverde with bloody saber, and at last he saw the pirate dash below. Instantly he followed, and beheld his enemy—the enemy of Spain, as well—enter the cabin.

"He shall not escape my sword!" cried Zavera, and the next moment, having dashed open the cabin door, he gazed upon a sight which congealed his blood.

Valverde's reeking saber was raised over his wife, and his child was crouched pale and shivering in one corner of the cabin, awaiting his doom.

The pirate's saber had started upon its descent, when the husband and father struck.

Valverde's arm was severed, and with a cry of mingled rage and pain, he drew a pistol and turned. Quick as lightning the weapon flew to a level with Zavera's head; but it was never discharged, for the saber again descended, and the pirate-chief sunk to the floor a corpse.

As the captain of the Planet turned to embrace his wife and child, he heard a commotion on deck which he well understood.

A pirate had fired the sinking Sweeper of the Seas, and the sailors were leaving her. Zavera did not take the kisses he craved, but lifted his loved ones in his arms and darted from the cabin. He gained the

bloody deck to find his sailors disengaging the Planet from her foe. They believed their captain dead.

The flames were swiftly approaching the pirate's magazine, and Zavera plunged into the smoke which came up from below in stifling columns. A moment he disappeared to his men, when he suddenly emerged from the smoke, and gained his own deck as the pirate blew up with deafening noise!

The Planet sailed into the inlet before the Spanish settlement, and that night Lioni Zavera clasped his wife and son to his heart, and thanked his God for the triple escape.

Long years have passed since that tragic day; but to the curious, is still pointed out the spot where the bloody scenes were enacted, and to him is related the story of the pirate's fatal prize.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

Old Kerg, Bartlett and his Family.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"Old Kerg Bartlett an' his four big boyees wur a bad lot of ever thar war one, but game; why, they didn't know nuthin' but fight, an' when they did go in, sumbody wur bound ter git hurt."

Old Red—he was never known by another name, even if he had one, which some considered doubtful—was just on the point of telling a lot of the boys one of his "recollections," of which he had a seemingly inexhaustible store, accumulated during a life of more than forty years on the border.

"It ar' now upward of fifteen years sence I see old Kerg last, an' I hopes it'll be fifty more afore I sees him ag'in."

"Yer don't seem ter like that old cuss, Red," said one of the party.

"No, I doesn't; nor would ye of you wur in my place. 'Twur in '39, I b'leeve, that I first hearn tell uv him. Jim Curtis an' me wur at Cathun, an' thar wur a great takin' on 'bout sum deviltry thar family hed been up to. They lived over in the Pawnee kentry, summers on Loupe Fork, an' these fellers at the fort war goin' over to clean old Kerg's ranch out."

"Wal, they went—Jim an' me wouldn't—an' they kim back a day or two arterward the wust whipped set ye ever see in yer life."

"Three uv the party staid behind whar the scrimmage had took place."

The next year Jim an' me started for the trappin' season from Randal, further up the river, an' hearin' that beaver war plenty over in the Marshy Lake kentry, we made fur thet pint an' druv stakes.

"Sum uv yer fellers that have been thar knows that the north fork of the Pawnee Loupe rises sunwhar in the hills a leetle south'ard uv the Marshy Lake; an' twur on this hyar very fork, only a good stretch below, thet old Kerg an' his happy family hed thar ranch."

But me an' Jim tetotally forgot thet circumstance, an' jess went to work on the flat-tails, keepin' one eye open fur Pawnees an' t'other fur business. We hed a powerful streak of luck.

"I never see beaver so plenty nor so easy ketcht. Thar warn't a mornin' but more'n half the traps wur full, an' me an' Jim wur calkerlatin' on a big thing, when all uv a sudden our good fortin' took a twist, an' darn the beaver we see fur a week arterwards."

They would take the bait no way we could fix it, er ef they did, they took thet'selves off with it.

"One night Jim sez to me, sez he, 'Red, I'm a nigger ef I don't b'leeve somebody's a-cleanin' the traps.'"

"The idee made me fairly jump, an' arter talkin' awhile we determined to watch thet night. 'Twur a good night fur the business, not too dark, nor too light, but jess aween the two like, ye know."

"Jim, he took the upper lot, an' I took t'other, layin' behind a goodish size rock from whar I could see mostly all over."

"Two or three times, long to'ard day, I kinder thought as how I see a shadder movin' slowly along the bank uv the crick, sum'times lookin' es big es a hoss, an' then ag'in disappearin' es ef it hed gone suddenly into the airth."

"I ain't no hand fur b'leevin' in sperrits, an' so I pulled back the hammer uv the old pea-shooter, an' waited till I war sartin the shadder wur arter the pelts."

"Jess then I heard the snap uv a trap a leetle further up the crick, an' I know a flat-tail wur in its grip."

"The shadder must 'a' heard it, too, fur off it started, an' purty soon back it kim, carryin' a whoppin' big beaver in his hand."

"Now, boyees, you see thet wur nigh sartin proof ag'in the shadder, and so, wait in till it gets right afore whar I lay behind

work afore we're done," sez I, gettin' to another hole.

"Shure anuff thar they war, all the family 'cept the cuss I hed rubbed out, an' the way they kim up showed thet they war spilin' fur a fight."

"About the time they got in range they all took cover, an' begin jumpin' from tree ter tree an' so on till they'd got up to the edge uv the little clearin' whar the ranch stood."

"Hullo! the house!" shouted old Kerg, hisself.

"Hullo," sez I.

"Hold yer fire an' let's parley," sez he.

"All right, but keep t'others off. No dodgin'," sez I ag'in.

"With thet the old cuss stepped out from behind his tree an' walks right up to the door."

"Ar you a-goin' to open?" he sed.

"Not no great deal, we ain't. What do yer want?" spoke uv Jim, sorter savage like.

"Keep yer eye peeled over thar, Bill," sez e, an' the other feller thet warn't thar answered, 'all right,' so naterally, thet I wish I may drap in my tracks ef I didn't think thar war another. 'Twur Jim, you know, makin' b'leeve thar war three on us."

"How many uv ye ar thar in thet cabin?" sed old Kerg.

"You'll think thar's a thousand of yer tackle it," says Jim.

"Well, it don't make no matter," sed Kerg; "what I wants to know is, why the h— did you shoot one uv my boys?"

"'Cause he war a durn'd, sneakin' thief, an' war cleanin' our traps," sez Jim, in t'other man's voice.

"It's a lie," sed old Kerg, who war gittin' mad by this time.

"You lie yerself, yer durned old hoss—thar!"

"Look out, Jim, hyar they comes!" I yelled out, loud es I could fur larfin' at Jim, an' sure anuff, they war, an' in ainst, too.

"Down with the old cuss, Red!" shouts Jim, an' I lets drive at thet villin, but thet rifle throwed off on me, an' flashed in thet pan. Jim he throwed one uv 'em right in his tracks, an' then they closed in on thet cabin, an' begun choppin' the door.

"We couldn't manage to shoot, no way, fur ye see, we hedn't left no loop-holes—a cussed big mistake, boyees, which none uv ye must never make."

"Ther door war the stoutest part uv the



THE PIRATE'S PRIZE.

the rock, I draws a close bead, an' lets it have a half-ounce smack into its big kass."

"You oughter see thet shadder double up. Down he went all uv a heap, but fetchin' in a whoop afore he went under, thet I raily do b'leeve could 'a' been heard five mile, an' which brought Jim Curtis over in less'n no time."

"The chap I hed rubbed out wur a whopper, six foot four ef he wur a inch, an' stout, why he could 'a' out'railed a grizzly in fa'r fight. He wur a ugly cuss, too, es ever I see, an' armed up to the chin."

"Hyar's the bad luck, Red," sez Jim, givin' the shadder a kick with his foot.

"Yes, thet's him," sez I, an' es I turned roun' ter pick up the beaver the feller hed dropped, I see three more uv the shadders a-makin' fur whar me an' Jim stood."

"They wur purty close onto us afore I see'd 'em, but they hadn't disklivered us yet becase uv a big rock thet lay kinder atween us."

"My rifle warn't loadened, an' seein' I wouldn't hev time ter fodder her, I whispers to Jim thet we'd better make tracks fur the ranch."

"Stoopin' purty close we got to cover afore the shadders kim up to whar the dead un lay, an' thar we halted a bit to listen."

"Lordy! what a lot uv cussin' an' howlin' an' slashin' around."

"'Twurn't long afore we found out who the cuss wur thet we hed rubbed out, an' when we knowed thet it wur one uv old Kerg Bartlett's boyes, we see in a minit thet thar war a-goin' ter be trouble."

"We watched the others tote off the dead 'un, an' then we made fur the ranch."

"Thar ar' wuss nor Pawnees, Red," sez Jim, an' I tell you, we've got ter do sum'thin', either fight it out, er cut sum'whers else."

"Which'll it be, Jim?" sez I.

"Fight 'em, an' be durned to the greasy karkasses," sed Jim, savage es a meat-ax."

"Nuff sed," sez I, an' with thet we begin ter git redly fur the squall thet war sartin ter come long 'bout daylight, which warn't fur off."

"Our ranch wur'n't much to speak of in the way uv a fort. A passel uv goodish-sized logs, a wheen uv rocks an' the like wur all, but then, you see, thar war me an' Jim Curtis 'axin', an' yer kin bet high thet thar war sum'thin'."

"Hyar they come," sed Jim, who was peekin' out uv a hole in the side frontin' the crick. "Four uv 'em, Red, an' I reckon thet old Kerg hisself are one uv 'em."

"Ef old Kerg ar' thar then thar'll be hot

old shanty, an' they soon giv it up, an' I heard one uv 'em say sumthin' 'bout fire."

"Tyarn! long afore thet cabin war blazin', an' when we see thet, Jim an' me jess looked at one another."

"Goin' under this time, Red," sez Jim.

"Looks that away," I sez.

"Bound to make a rush fur it," sed Jim, an' I see him look to the primin', an' loosen his knife."

"By thet time thet whole consarn war in a bleeze, an' I tell you, lads, it wur hot in thar. The villins, we knowed, hed treed right in front uv thet door, an' thar they stood ready to let us hev it jess es soon es we kim out. 'Twur light es day—in-fack, day had about broke, but enyhow, the bleeze wur mighty bright."

"One uv us war bound ter go down at thet first dash, mebbly both, an' under sich circumstances things looked squally."

"Purty soon one end uv the shanty drapped in, an' we see'd the dash hed ter be made right off, er not at'all."

"Reddy, Red," sez Jim, cool an' calm like.

"I be, Jim," sed I.

"Well, hyar goes—What thet blazes ar' thet?" sez Jim, stoppin' an' list'nin'.

"'Twur a loud yell, an' then two or three rifle-cracks, an' then another scrougin' yell, seemin' like a dozen er more."

"Jim throwed the door open, an' out we went, jess in time ter see a lot uv fellers kim up in a hurry, an' then take off, more'n half uv 'em, arter the Bartlett family, who wur makin' tracks fur the hills purty lively, now, I tell you. Not all uv 'em, fur they hed fetched another, who lay dead es a gun-bar'l right out in thet open."

"We soon see'd how it wur."

"This hyar party war from Randal, an' 'mong 'em war sum fellers thet old Kerg an' his boyees hed thrashed the summer afore, when they went ter clean him out."

"They hed gone over to the old rip's cabin, an' findin' the family absent, they took thet trail an' follered up to whar we war."

"Old Kerg hed been up to sum uv his deviltry—murdered a old man an' his darter, an' stole all thet horses an' cattle."

"Thet's the reason why they war arter him."

"Well, the old man an' one uv the boyees got clear off—wuss luck fur me, fur he giv me a wheen o' trouble arterwards."

"We lost our ranch an' all the pelts, but me an' Jim kinder thought es how we done purty well in savin' our own ha'r."

"What do 'ee think, boyees?"

Beat Time's Notes.

DELAYED ANSWERS.

JOHN wants some rules to keep at an even temperature in winter. Well, in the first place, don't wear linen clothes. Hot punches are the best inside clothing. When you go to bed don't remove your boots, for they will prevent you taking cold in your feet. When you go out, fill your pockets full of live coals. Keep your nose red-hot, as it is the most exposed. If possible, sit by a warm stove all day, although your wife is obliged to split the wood and feed the pigs. Avoid hugging or lingering around cold lamp-posts at night. Never stand on a cold street-corner to argue with a creditor, nor step into a gutter to let a lady pass, nor run around town barefooted.

D. writes that he can't sleep at night, and wants advice. Probably it would be well for him to take a small dose of reformation to act on his conscience, and he might forget himself, as his sweetheart evidently did, and go to sleep. If that won't do he should ruminate on what an intelligent man he is, which will no doubt have a very soothing effect on his nerves.

L. has great distress because he can't get a hat to suit him, and wants to know what he shall do. No doubt he has his head set on a hat, and if he could only get the hat set on his head it would mend the difficulty, but we can't advise.

SALLIE wants to know what is good for a white complexion. Try arsenic. A lady friend of mine tried it, and came out with as white a complexion as you could wish. Six persons with white gloves brought her out, and the family and friends followed. It even furnished her with a pair of wings, and she became decidedly angelic. The only trouble is that the young ladies who take it fail to take enough—which is exasperating.

AGRI.—My theory is that you can raise double the crops on your farm by either planting double the amount of seed, or double the amount of acres. (2) Plant your hay-stacks very early. (3) Sow your coats about the middle of spring. (4) Study well your neighbor's agricultural paper, and believe all that Horace Greeley says.

B. wants to know what kind of a chance there would be for him to come to the city. Well, the chances are that if he has money enough to pay his fare he can come, and if he has money enough to pay his way he can stay, providing he behaves himself. Let me ask what you could do, what you would do, what you wouldn't do, and what you would do if you had half a chance, and the way you would or wouldn't do it?

Q. wants to know if a graduate of a seminary is a Seminole. Not quite. There is a difference quite palpable between the two words. Seminole means half a mole, and seminary half a nary. Set them down and subtract both from each other and you will find the difference is slightly vast—not vastly slight.

C. B.—I can advise you of no way by which you can get rid of insurance agents. I have put them out of my house frequently, but they don't feel put out in the least. As each belongs to the best company, you can't agree with them, or make them believe they are boring you to death. I put a guard at my front gate, but they scale the back wall. You can't keep them out, and I verily believe if the Prussian army had a battalion of insurance agents they would have taken Paris long since. I have stood at my door and shot them down till I was tired, but that only brought on a worse attack. If I lock the doors they will climb down the chimney, and if I tell them I ain't at home they won't believe me. If I tell them I am healthy and don't expect to die very soon, they console me by telling me I am liable to go off at any moment, and again if I say I am too much unhealthy to be insured, they laugh and say I am good for many years yet, and when I tell them then that there is then no need of haste, they get around it somehow, and they almost make me wish I was under my tombstone (without a policy) where the agents cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

ISAAC.—In trying to become a lawyer it is necessary that you should read Blackstone, Coke, Charcoal, and all those legal heads on other legal heads. Get into the habit of living upon circumstances, and trust in Providence though Providence put no trust in you, and be choice in the saloons you attend. You may make the business pay, and the business may make you pay, or both.

JIM.—It is a good thing to always be on the look-out. My school-teacher used to impress this upon my mind, but whenever I would put it in practice and look out the window she would lick me.

S. D.—A man who would steal a glance and take an opportunity hasn't the least particle of the gentleman about him that you could find with a 40 horse-power microscope.

C.—Yes, charity should begin at home, but the fault is now days that it too often stays there.

B. S.—A man who has left off drinking is often not very long in getting right on again.

PATRICK.—A man who is bald may have a well-balanced head—nothing on top and nothing in it.

HENRY.—It would not be proper to call a young lady-teacher the mis-chief because she is the chief miss.

T.—Some men's words would make splendid pavements, as they are so hard.

JACK.—Don't borrow money. A borrowed dime soon saps a dollar. I always ask for money with the intention of never paying it back, which is not borrowing.

WIFE.—An uncleanly husband was cured of small hours by his wife persisting in talking before strangers of her late husband. He gave up thinking that it was not better late than never.

JAKE LONG.—Persevere in all you undertake. Never give up. I had a venerable uncle who assiduously devoted seven years of his life, in spite of all obstacles, to the invention of a machine, that would lay real eggs at a small cost of raw material. Not living long enough, he failed to perfect it, but it was often remarked that he stuck to it with commendable energy, and his zeal has redounded to the infinite credit of the Time family.

BEAT TIME.